



Best Practices for Relationship and Trust Building with Indigenous Communities

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United Way
East Ontario

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES
IN PRESCOTT-RUSSELL, OTTAWA,
LANARK AND RENFREW COUNTIES

IN COLLABORATION WITH



KAGITA MIKAM
Managed Employment & Training Inc.



Tungasuvingat Inuit

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From United Way East Ontario's environmental scan, [The Employment Gap for Indigenous Youth in Eastern Ontario](#), we learned about the importance of creating safe, culturally sensitive places of employment when attempting to successfully recruit Indigenous youth. Ensuring cultural safety is key in fostering supportive environments and relationships. It goes beyond cultural awareness (acknowledgement of one's own and other cultures), cultural sensitivity (accepting of others' differences), and cultural competence (using academic, experiential, and interpersonal skills to understand difference). Cultural safety also involves a component of self-reflection to recognize our own cultural lens so that we may develop empathy and an appreciation for advocacy, thus moving us towards understanding and positive change.

In the spirit of embarking on this journey of inclusion and discovery, please find below a list of some best practices for both trust and relationship building when reaching out to the Indigenous community.

Where to Begin

- Identify the Community (whether urban, provincial, territorial, or national) you would like to invest in:
- Research the community beforehand (this includes organizations, Elders, main/key players, and the history of the community).
- Inquire about the needs of the community?
- Have a presence – go to local Indigenous events, meet the community members, ask questions, or be the tourist.
- Learn the traditions, rules, regulations, governance systems, traditional laws and principles that are followed within the community.
- Cultivate an awareness of the myriad of worldviews, connections to land, language and living history that exist with Indigenous communities.
- Make sure you understand not only what you need from the community but also what you are willing to offer the community. The importance of the principle of reciprocity cannot be overstressed.
- Be respectful of the land on which you reside. Learn the history of this territory and its relationship with the Indigenous communities who first inhabited it.

Investing in Indigenous Communities

- Whether for research or initial contact, understand that, after a history of colonization, rebuilding trust is essential.
- Acknowledge the context of the ongoing effects of this historical legacy on Indigenous communities and take the time to educate yourself on this subject.



- Within this context, recognize that you are a settler on this land.
- Host community gatherings or feasts to initiate contact and as a means of introducing yourself.
- Find ways to support and work alongside the community.
- Understand the cultural, safety, and ethical protocols that exist within the communities that you are working with.

Determine the Purpose of Your Relationship Building

Questions to consider:

- What are your intentions and why?
- True Indigenous relationships are built on reciprocity. A relationship built solely with the intention of taking, whether knowledge or resources, is not laying a solid foundation and the hope of establishing a long-term relationship will not endure.
- What are you offering? How are you, or will you, be investing or contributing to the community?
- How are you minimizing harm to the community you want to enter? What is your footprint, whether emotional, spiritual, environmental, or psychological?
- Are you bearing in mind that Indigenous people are not project based (i.e., their relationships are reciprocal and non-transactional in nature) and that the journey you are embarking on is a lifelong relationship?
- What are the mental health and well-being supports that are built into your goals and intentions?

Final Thoughts

Indigenous communities are working towards reconciliation that will help undo the overall harm and long-term impact of colonization. Undertaking relationship and trust building requires the effort of all parties involved. To this end, please keep in mind that the areas of focus in this document are nonspecific to any Indigenous person or community. We have simply raised some initial questions and points to consider when attempting to engage with Indigenous communities.

In closing, we hope you will find this document useful as you begin your journey of successfully creating reciprocal relationships with the Indigenous Peoples of Canada.

