



National Centre for  
Truth and Reconciliation

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

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*vérité et réconciliation*

UNIVERSITÉ DU MANITOBA

# CREATING AN ENGAGEMENT PLAN WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

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Considerations and approaches to develop relationships with Indigenous peoples, communities and Nations about the future use or protection of former Residential School Sites and/or buildings.

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Prepared for  
Indigenous Services Canada

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# Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Introduction	2
Central questions guiding this report	2
Guideposts to support effective engagement	2
Framework to establish an engagement plan	6
Considerations to create an engagement plan	8
Phase 0: The Background Work	8
Phase 1: Setting the Foundation for a Successful Relationship	10
Phase 2: Establishing a relationship	12
Phase 3: Co-develop an engagement plan	13
Phase 4: Maintain the relationship through accountability	15
Understanding and working with existing protocols	16
Key takeaways	18
Conclusion	19
Appendix	20
Examples of Protocols	20
References	21

## Introduction

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) has asked the National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation (NCTR) to produce a report that provides a high-level discussion on the considerations and approaches when developing engagement plans with Indigenous peoples, communities, and Nations about the future use or protection of former Residential School Sites and/or buildings.

This report will be guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), including the right to participate in decision making and Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), and will begin with a review of:

- consultation/engagement protocols from Indigenous nations, national Indigenous organizations, and Indigenous communities.
- available case studies and best practice guidelines that have been developed with Indigenous communities.
- relevant academic literature (as a final step to supplement the above materials).

## Central questions guiding this report

1. What guideposts and values will support an effective engagement plan with Indigenous communities?
2. What framework can be used to develop an engagement plan?
3. What are the considerations to develop a meaningful engagement plan that provides effective support and resources during the process?
4. What strategies should be considered when developing an engagement plan related to the unique circumstances of the use and/or protection of former Residential School Sites (RSS) and/or buildings?

## Guideposts to support effective engagement

Reviewing engagement strategies, consultation plans and reports from Indigenous organizations and following the framework of UNDRIP, there are several themes that can serve as guideposts to create meaningful and relevant engagement planning with Indigenous communities. These guideposts must inform and be incorporated into every phase of the engagement planning process.

### **Indigenous-led**

All engagements, including the development of engagement plans must be Indigenous led. This means Indigenous peoples must be part of the process in developing the engagement plan. An engagement plan cannot be something that is developed within the offices of government officials. All aspects of the engagement process must be developed in collaboration with those Nations and communities with which have been impacted, or are impacted, by the restoration of RSS or buildings.

### **Survivor-led**

Survivor voices must be informing the entire engagement planning process. Not only are Survivors co-developing the planning process, there must be continuous conversations and relationship-building to begin to rebuild trust. Nothing should be decided or acted upon without Survivor input and approval. It should be recognized that Survivors of Residential Schools were taken from Nations, communities and vast territories across Canada. Therefore, significant investment of time and resources should be made to reach out to Survivors across the country who attended the respective RSS or building.

### **Diversity**

Diverse perspectives include diversity of gender (male, female, two spirit), age diversity (Elder and youth), diverse positions in community (Chief and Council, resource management, support workers, etc.), diverse Survivor perspectives (within community and off-site Survivors), and diverse Indigenous perspectives (First Nation, Inuit and Métis Nations). The engagement plan should be co-developed with the Indigenous nations, communities and organizations impacted by Residential Schools. Diversity also means that each Residential School site impacts Indigenous peoples from different Indigenous nations across the country, and this diversity must be considered in the planning process. Diversity also means that one engagement plan will not be able to address all perspectives and all former school sites. The diversity of Indigenous peoples and Survivors across Canada requires multiple processes to ensure diverse perspectives and experiences are included in the overall engagement planning process. This can only be achieved by asking people how they wish to be engaged that will be relevant and meaningful to them.

### **Collaboration**

The process of engagement must be collaborative, allowing for social, cultural, political, economic, environmental and spiritual concerns to be voiced. Collaboration means that Indigenous peoples are equal partners and are a part of generating ideas and making decisions at every stage of engagement planning. In the past, and still today, power imbalances and distance exist between government and community. Collaboration is an important part of the process to help with equalizing power in decision making. Collaboration as a guidepost allows for relationships to form between people and enables new ideas and common interests to be expressed.

### **Capacity Transfer**

Capacity transfer goes a step beyond capacity building in that it recognizes the capacity of the various groups and their ability to work with each other. Are there resource constraints, i.e. time, people, administration that could limit the success of a project? Or, on the contrary, what capacity exists that could allow for this project to be successful? Historically, the mindset driving the colonization of Canada was rooted in the belief that Indigenous peoples, and their communities, are at a deficit and Indigenous peoples have to build capacity to be “helped.” However, to build relationships nation-to-nation requires ISC to consider their capacity to be able to meet with Indigenous peoples. What capacity must be built within ISC to be prepared and ready to engage with community? Many of the Calls to Action require intercultural

competency training, anti-racism training, conflict resolution training and human rights training as necessary for the development of effective relationship building with Indigenous peoples. What level of readiness and preparedness is required to take on future engagements in this project?

The Two Eyed Seeing model, popularized by a Mi-kmaq Nation Elder, Albert Marshall has been applied in the context of First Nations and Indigenous communities in Canada in public health. The Two-Eyed Seeing Model is to “Learn... to see from one eye with the best in Indigenous ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the best in Western (or mainstream) ways of knowing ... and learn to use both these eyes for the benefit of all.”<sup>1</sup> This model can be a good example to contextualize the importance of capacity transfer.

### **Structure and flexibility**

While structure and plans are important, it is much more important to value flexibility as each community will have different capacity and willingness to be engaged. For example, the people or community you are engaging may have different timelines than your own and they may have some of the consultation work done within their community. There is a spectrum of possible circumstances of where Indigenous communities are at in their planning. Allow space in the planning process for flexibility. As you hear more from people in the community you will start to see how plans can flex to be more effective in the approaches used to deliver solutions. Be mindful and plan for accessibility for people with disabilities. Flexibility also means that there can be no checklist approach, but simply a range of considerations to guide decisions at different stages. The pre-existing relationship between ISC and the community will impact how engagement planning is undertaken.

### **Meaningful and relevant**

As you build relationships with different communities, you will begin to see that not every phase or consideration mentioned in this report must be done. These are considerations to help with the engagement planning process. Engagement fatigue can be real for many people in various communities where there are constant demands on their time. Early on in the relationship building phase, be aware of the work that has been established already and meet people where they are at. For example, some Indigenous governments and communities will be ready to move to the implementation phase as they have already gone through a series of collaborations and engagements with their communities. Some communities may have an engagement plan, but are looking for support in carrying out the sessions. Others may be seeking for more collaboration to help co-develop the engagement plan. The key takeaway from this guidepost is to ensure that engagement planning is relevant and meaningful to the groups of people within the community.

### **Respect and reciprocity**

Respect is paramount to the success of a project. Asking about protocols, culture and traditions of each person and community you engage with is helpful to know which behaviours will be

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<sup>1</sup> Roher et al., 2021

viewed as respectful. Be humble to allow respect for the people you are engaging with. It is not about respecting some and not others. There are diverse knowledges, values, voices and histories and it is important to hold complex and intersecting views while being open to the distinct needs of those you are listening to. Respect can only be achieved if there are authentic interactions. Reciprocity can only be achieved if there is accountability. This is not about a top-down approach where the government comes in to inform and deliver information, this is about fluidity and continual exchange of information. Sharing information with ISC will only be available should there be an established relationship that is rooted in respect and trust. Check in continually to ensure that respect and reciprocity is present.

### **Effective communication**

Communicating effectively is about having a communication plan that will allow people to be engaged. An effective communication strategy is not about having a one-size fits all plan, but asking people in community how to communicate, and how they prefer to receive information. Think about having translators and using Indigenous language in the communication process. Also allow for there to be different communication channels (i.e. radio, online community boards, newsletters, social media, in-person gatherings, etc.) that will notify people of the engagement sessions and different communication methods to allow for various voices to be shared. Be aware of how certain language can hinder a relationship from progressing. For example, the word “stakeholder” and “consultation” can create tension with Survivors as this language is seen as institutional and not respecting the humanness of Indigenous peoples.

### **Trauma informed and health supports**

It is essential that all engagement planning and engagements are trauma-informed. Acknowledging that talking about the past, present and future may be difficult for many people who have lived through and continue to live through trauma. Building relationships means that there is a need for patience, compassion, understanding, humility, gentleness and kindness. Health supports must be present at every stage of engagement planning and execution. And importantly, health supports must continue to be available after engagement processes. Available health supports should reflect the needs and wishes of the communities (i.e., some communities may prefer traditional healers with traditional medicines, while others may want different health supports). Bringing in health professionals on projects is important to direct people to the care they need, but equally important, ISC staff can identify signs of trauma and direct people to the appropriate resources and always deal with people in a kind, gentle and compassionate way.

### **Ceremony**

Ceremony is part of Indigenous peoples’ culture. Ceremony is not something that happens once through a final outcome or commemoration, but should be integrated throughout the relationship building and engagement planning process. The community may choose to integrate ceremony into the process and there should be time provided to honour ceremony. ISC should be prepared to participate in ceremony, when invited, to strengthen the relationship. As mentioned throughout, the inclusion and appropriateness of ceremony will depend on the community you are working with and their established culture and traditions related to incorporating ceremony.

## **Protocols**

Protocols are integral to building relationships in a good way with Indigenous peoples, Nations and communities. Protocol is central to Indigenous identity and can be expressed in diverse ways with different nations and communities. Protocol is about recognizing the relationship established with all life forms<sup>2</sup>. Some protocols can be found on the website of the Nation, Council, or organization you are trying to work with. Understand there will be similarities and differences between groups you are building relationships with. Toward the end of this report there is a section discussing general themes to consider when learning about existing protocols.

## **FPIC**

FPIC as a part of UNDRIP will ground the process of planning engagement with Indigenous communities. Free meaning that there are no actions that hinder Indigenous peoples' free will, either directly or indirectly. Prior meaning that decisions and plans for developing or protecting the use of former RSS and buildings must be done as early as possible and not before any plans are made. Informed meaning that the information provided must be accurate and support the community and peoples with the resources and capacity required as deemed sufficient by Indigenous peoples and Nations. Consent meaning that Indigenous Nations can say yes or no and they are not expected to consent to any proposal even after engagements have concluded. Indigenous peoples are entitled to consider proposals, as they are put forth by ISC, once the free, prior and informed consultation requirements are fulfilled.

## **Framework to establish an engagement plan**

### **Phase 0: The background work**

Before you reach out to Indigenous communities, First Nations and relevant groups. Do the background research on the community, Nation, or organization. List out questions you have, consider what you can answer in advance, learn about protocols, culture and traditions, identify the appropriate people in leadership to reach out to, learn about the locations and lands of the respective RSS, identify the diverse people and perspectives to include, and do the internal work with staff to be prepared and ready to build relationships with Indigenous peoples. Ensure that you are familiar with the guideposts and those are integrated throughout each phase of the engagement planning process.

### **Phase 1: Setting the foundation for trusting relationships**

While community engagement may be commonly understood, it is worth reminding ourselves that the purpose of community engagement is to bring people within the community together to achieve mutual long-term outcomes through processes of relationship building, discussions, and decision-making. Bringing people together can be difficult if there is no relationship established, or, as is in the case of the colonial development of Canada, a relationship has not been positive,

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<sup>2</sup> Hilton, 2021

mutually beneficial, or promises or agreements have not been upheld. Before an effective plan can be created, relationships must be established and maintained.

The first stage of this framework is what Ferland, Chen, & Villagrán Becerra in the *Working in good ways: a framework for resources and Indigenous community engagement*, refer to as the 'work before the work,'<sup>3</sup> meaning learning about the community and seeking out the Survivors, leaders, teachers, Elders, spaces and resources within the community. In this stage there are no partnership discussions, assessments or decisions to be made. It is simply going to establish a relationship and show that you are wanting to form a relationship. Think of this as visiting by showing up, being present, asking questions and listening to learn about one another. Visiting is an effective way to build trust and learn about culture, traditions and protocols.

### **Phase 2: Establishing a relationship**

This stage is about committing to a relationship and starting to engage in discussions with people in the community. Asking people about their interests, concerns and questions that need to be asked and considered around RSS and buildings. This is often about listening to Truths and understanding what has happened and what they would like to see happen. Bearing witness and learning about how the community would like to be engaged, should it be the right timing to move forward with this set project. Know what other projects are going on in the community. Showing that you can add value to the other priorities in the community. Showing that you know about other government projects that are taking up space and time in their community. There will be more discussion further down about being trauma-informed, ensuring there are health supports and taking the precautions to not be causing harm in this phase. This is about connecting on the human level to show that a relationship with ISC is possible and can move forward in a good way through transparency, reciprocity and trust.

### **Phase 3: Co-develop an engagement plan**

At this stage, a formal partnership to engage in developing an engagement plan can begin. Partnerships are established on a case by case basis. The purpose of the partnership could be to bring together intersecting ideas and concerns about preserving, restoring, or using former RSS. A formal engagement plan is co-developed with the community. Be prepared to know how other government departments like, CIRNAC or Environment Canada, are engaging with Nations and Indigenous communities across Canada.

### **Phase 4: Maintain the relationship through accountability**

Many Indigenous peoples or communities are engaged with little to no follow-up or the execution falls short of what was agreed upon or promised. In this phase ISC should be prepared with knowing the processes for following through on a project and what the government is able to provide. Consider how the relationship will be maintained through the implementation of the project and how you will maintain community engagement. Consider how relationships will be sustained and how to acknowledge contributions in a culturally appropriate way. Consider how conflict will be dealt with in a meaningful way and follow-up appropriately.

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<sup>3</sup> Ferland et al., 2021



Continue to ask Indigenous peoples and Survivors how to be engaged in the future. Remember to revisit the guideposts through this phase and future work.

## Considerations to create an engagement plan

The first two sections were to set the foundation with structure and consistency to guide the overall engagement planning process. This section will enhance each phase by thinking about key questions and considerations when developing the engagement plan. Note that it is not the engagement plan, but to provide some considerations to establish a plan. Some starting questions are included for each consideration. Note, you may not be able to answer all the questions, they may not all be relevant for every engagement planning process, and further, they are not exhaustive. They are provided to start conversations and planning processes.

In any form of change or engagement, there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach that will be free of error or hiccups. These questions and considerations will be altered as you learn more about the Indigenous communities you are establishing relationships with. Additionally, depending on pre-existing relationships with different Nations and communities, not every engagement planning will need to begin at phase 0.

### Phase 0: The Background Work

Before you reach out to Indigenous communities, Nations and relevant groups. Do the background research and preparation.

#### **List out all of your questions**

The purpose of this exercise is to spend time reflecting and considering what you know and do not know before going to community and asking. It is important to remind yourself of the guideposts listed above and identify your purpose and goals. Also consider what may be the interests, purpose and goals of the different people you want to meet. Some questions to start the process include:

- *What questions do you genuinely have and do not have answers to?*
- *Can you answer any of these questions?*
- *Will these questions cause harm if asked to people in community, like Survivors or Intergenerational Survivors?*
- *What are your intentions and what do you hope for through the engagement planning process?*

#### **Location of Residential School Sites**

The purpose of this exercise is to consider the location of RSS. Location is more than the geographical region; location is connected to the land and the relationships with the land. Consider the agreements and the treaties as well as the experiences you know about the different communities. You can use the [NCTR Interactive Map](#) or other federal resources to gather information about each RSS. There may be oral traditions or stories that you may come to know as you build relationships in the community, but before you receive the privilege of

hearing Truths you should take time to learn the history and context of the Indigenous communities you will be engaging with as it relates to the RSS and buildings.

- *Where are the RSS?*
- *What do you know about the land and treaties of the areas you are interested in engaging?*
- *In what jurisdictions are they located (regional, provincial, federal, Indigenous governments, private property)?*
- *What work has already taken place, or is underway, to honour Residential School Survivors or preserve or commemorate this history?*
- *What RSS information is missing?*
- *What churches or organizations were involved?*

### **Understand the diversity of people**

The purpose of this exercise is to consider the intersecting groups (Nations, communities, organizations including Survivor organizations) who would have interest in each of the RSS. It would be helpful to begin creating a map of the different groups of people and begin to consider their interests and needs related to RSS. Be careful when using the word stakeholder, as this can be triggering for Survivors. Consider the traditional territories of the people in which the schools were located and also the communities in which the children were brought from.

- *Who are the groups of people from the traditional territories in which the schools are located?*
- *What communities were children taken from to attend this RSS?*
- *What other groups of people were impacted by this RSS?*
- *What groups are now affected by considerations for future decision making around the former RSS?*
- *What questions might different groups have?*
- *What languages are spoken?*
- *What do you know about the community's culture or traditions?*
- *What projects are initiated, in other Federal departments, with that community?*
- *What communities are already reaching out to ISC (i.e. Williams Lake First Nation)?*
- *Think of other projects you have worked on that weren't successful, why weren't they successful? What Indigenous groups may be hesitant to work with ISC? Why? Are there changes within ISC to help with forming or reforming the relationship with that community?*

### **ISC staff preparedness**

The purpose of this exercise is to assess the preparedness of ISC staff to engage with and build lasting relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities. Call to Action #92 mentions the need for organizations to be trained in intercultural competency, anti-racism, conflict resolution and human rights. Understanding one's own worldview will help with forming, establishing and maintaining a relationship through the co-development of engagement planning.

- *Are the staff involved in the engagements prepared and trained as stated in Call to Action #92?*

- *Are staff members trained in intercultural competency, anti-racism, conflict resolution and human rights that is grounded in Indigenous knowledges?*
- *What time and space is created for staff to reflect on their relationship with the communities that will be engaged?*
- *Are staff aware of the worldviews they are bringing forward before engaging with the community?*

### **Learning protocols**

The purpose of this exercise is to learn about the culture, traditions and protocols before reaching out. You will not be able to learn everything, but doing your due diligence to learn where you can will go a long way to showing trustworthiness. There is a section later in this report that provides examples of protocols from different Indigenous peoples. You can go online, prior to reaching out to communities, to see what is shared or what you have gathered from other people who have engaged with the same community. As you begin building relationships in Phase 1, consider creating a reference list. Try to establish openness and transparency with the community, but also interdepartmentally, so Indigenous people do not need to train and retrain government officials.

- *What cultural knowledge, traditions or protocols can you find prior to engaging with Indigenous peoples, Nations or organizations?*
- *As you learn more about protocols, how are you internally in ISC and across the Federal government keeping track of protocols to help with sustaining relationships in the future?*
- *Who are the leaders within the Indigenous community or organization to ask about protocols? Try to find the appropriate leader in the community who can advise on the protocols and ceremonies you will be participating in should you be invited to the community.*

## **Phase 1: Setting the Foundation for a Successful Relationship**

### **Reach out to leaders**

Before going to a community and talking to people, reach out to the appropriate person in leadership or governing body and state your intention. Leadership structure can look different across Nations. Indigenous governments could have a designated person to deal with Residential Schools and heritage sites, some may have a person specific to Survivors, others may have a body established to lead the work of Residential Schools and commemoration. At the early stages you are not going with an explicit agenda of needing to get anything out of the engagement, but going to visit, be present and build a relationship. State your intention of wanting to build a relationship.

- *Who are the leaders in the community you can reach out to?*
  - *Residential Schools and Heritage Site? Bodies that represent Survivors?*
- *Are there other government officials, or people, that have a good relationship already established in this community?*
- *Are there relationships that could help to establish an authentic connection?*
- *Who within your team and organization is good at visiting and building relationships?*
- *What do you know or remember about people in the community you have already worked with?*

### **Visit community**

If you are welcomed to the community by leaders, go visit, say hello and listen. Before any official plan or partnership can be established, Indigenous peoples want to know that you can be trusted. Be prepared to meet with community leaders, Elders, Survivors, teachers, Knowledge Keepers, youth and greet people with openness. Learn about what they are currently dealing with in life and what they care about. Don't go with the expectation of getting something out of it. Go knowing that the process of showing up and being there to listen is the first step to engage in the reconciliation process.

- *What are good conversational talking points when you meet new people?*
- *What do you enjoy about visiting?*
- *What does visiting mean to you?*

### **Listen to stories**

Listen to stories of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Survivors and historians within the community to learn about social and cultural dynamics, customs and practices. Note that in this process of learning about stories, be prepared with the health supports required for trauma-informed care. Stories related to the experiences of Residential Schools can cause more harm and can be retraumatizing if not proper care and support are in place. You may also be invited to participate in ceremony before being trusted to listen to stories.

- *What are the values of the community?*
- *What are their questions related to former RSS?*

### **Learn to communicate in a way that benefits community**

Learn about where people gather and how they communicate with each other. Try to understand what people value and genuinely care about people in your questions. This is about building trust and relationships.

- *Where do people gather?*
- *What are the effective forums for communication?*
- *What would provide people in the community the most benefit?*
- *What would cause harm?*
- *What will help get different people out?*
- *Where are people stretched too thin?*
- *What do people know or not know about RSS and buildings?*
- *What ways do people like to communicate, in what methods and how frequently?*

Note that the above questions are not to be asked sequentially to people in community, but for ISC to reflect on after visiting with people. It is important to note that you are not going to observe people like research subjects, but to go with the intention of building a relationship. Should you be open and respected by those you are meeting with, you may be privileged to receive answers to these questions. If there is a relationship beginning to form, it may be appropriate to ask some of these questions within the context of the conversation you are having. There is no way to advise on this as the intention of the question is based on the conversation and an understanding of the established relationship.

## Phase 2: Establishing a relationship

### **Request permission for engagement**

This stage isn't necessarily about planning the engagement, but talking about what could an engagement planning process look like. It is important to seek permission from leadership by either submitting a written request or phoning or emailing leadership. As mentioned above, leadership could be different for each Nation or organization. There could be a department specific for Survivors or it could be a committee responsible for Residential School site inquiries, or it could be Health and Wellness department or Chief and Council directly.

- *Have you looked into the appropriate leader to contact?*
- *Have you requested permission through leadership to begin talking to community about engagement planning?*

### **Respect time**

Be aware that there are often several projects or political matters that leadership is attending to. Respect the time and availability and be open to scheduling engagements that are convenient for them.

- *What is the availability of the leadership you are working with?*
- *What timeline is appropriate for the different groups you are engaging with?*
- *Are there other federal government projects going on at this time?*
- *How can you collaborate within and across the Federal Government?*
- *In what ways can you show flexibility with those you are working with?*

### **Be trauma informed**

Ensure that there is trauma informed training and approach to building relationships with all people, but especially Survivors and intergenerational Survivors. There should be health support resources available that are culturally appropriate to help those who may be impacted by sharing stories related to Residential Schools.

- *Have you engaged with Resolution Health Support Workers about ways to offer support?*
- *Are the resources and supports provided culturally appropriate?*
- *How can you collaborate with the community to provide the resources and supports that will best serve the people you are building relationships with?*

### **Prepare questions for preliminary engagement**

Come prepared with various methods of possible engagement and ask permission on what would work for the groups you wish to engage in the planning process. This could be an outline of topics and questions to be discussed. State that you would like to co-develop the plan with leadership and community.

- *Based on what you know about the people you have met so far, have they provided you any insight into questions to ask?*
- *Ask people what questions they have and want answered?*
- *What questions do you have already?*
- *Go back to earlier phases, what have you learned so far?*

### **Listen for feedback**

Listen to Survivors, community members and leaders for feedback on the questions and the best approaches for developing an engagement plan and partnership. Be sure to share feedback with leadership on what you heard in the relationship building and co-development phase.

- *What themes are emerging?*
- *What has surprised you?*
- *What stories have you heard that help bring context to the RSS?*
- *Who else should be included in the engagement planning?*
- *What did you learn about how people want to be communicated with and engaged?*

### **Do your research and share**

The purpose of this consideration is to be prepared and fill in gaps that ISC may have answers to. This is not about doing formal research or going back to the office and not engaging. It is about learning more about the landscape of how the federal government has worked with the community. Be careful with this consideration as you do not want to be stuck doing research over the necessary work of building the relationship.

- *Are there ways you can follow-up and find answers to preliminary questions?*
- *What have you learned from working on other projects or with other communities?*
- *Are there answers you can provide soon to help build trust?*
- *What is the process you will establish for maintaining transparency with the group as you begin to find more information and answers?*
- *What additional research can be done before you begin planning formal engagements?*

## Phase 3: Co-develop an engagement plan

### **Review feedback and notes from previous meetings and conversations**

Based on the feedback so far, how does the community want to participate in the engagement planning process? Start building a planning process together, based on the mutually identified goals, interests and capacity. Reassess what you have learned so far. Be reflective and collect themes. Go back to the community to clarify if needed.

- *What are people starting to say are their interests and concerns from the existing meetings and conversations about RSS and buildings?*
- *What are some of the themes that arise?*
- *Are there conflicts that you did not foresee?*
- *Are there additional supports that are requested?*

### **Assess what you know and don't know**

Consider what you know and do not know about how the relevant people want to participate in the planning process. Same as the last consideration, be reflective and humble by what you have learned.

- *What questions have been answered already?*
- *Have your questions changed from when you initially started the relationship building process?*

- *What questions and needs are important to the community? What questions do they have?*
- *What opportunities do you see arising?*
- *What partnerships have arisen?*
- *Are there certain people in the community that can champion and strongly influence the success of your project?*
- *What resources can you provide the community leaders or champions to ensure that your future engagements are successful?*

### **Co-develop the engagement strategy together**

This cannot be done alone in the office. Go back to the community and ask to co-develop the engagement plan. Will this be done in multiple sessions with different groups or a large planning session? This will be different for each community. Include the community language where you can and also include their words that will be understandable. Develop a timeline and budget that is realistic and appropriate based on the supports requested by the community. Consider travel, accommodations, honorariums and other expenses.

- *Who will be engaged?*
- *What will you use for engagement (meetings, surveys, townhalls, focus groups)?*
- *When will the engagements occur? How many sessions will you have?*
- *How will you ensure the engagement sessions are accessible to those with disabilities or with those who require a translator?*
- *How much time will you give for spreading the word that sessions are held?*
- *What other projects are occurring in the community? Are other Federal government projects going on at the same time that will impact availability?*

### **Go back to community to validate**

Take what you heard and create an engagement plan based on the feedback from the session(s). Then go back to the community and present what you heard. State that 'this is what you heard' based on the session(s) and ask 'did we get this right?' Listen to community and adjust accordingly as they may suggest another strategy.

- *Did we get this right?*
- *What is missing?*
- *How could it be improved?*

### **Implement the engagement plan**

Once verified with the community then start to implement the plan while maintaining the guideposts from above. Be sure that as you listen to Indigenous peoples you are collaborative, flexible, respectful and communicating at each stage with Indigenous peoples and Survivors.

- If there are additional people coming in to help with taking notes, explain their role
- Be prepared to remind people of the health supports and resources
- Explain how the information will be used and for the purposes of use
- Explain how people will be followed up with after

- Do what you say you are going to do and if plans change communicate how and why the change occurred and provide alternative ways to follow-up.
- Explain how conflicts will be resolved should there be conflicts.

Note that an engagement plan may consider four potential stages:

1. **Outreach** - assessing community needs, including appropriate ceremony and health supports. This will be the focus of Phase 1 and 2.
2. **Imagining solutions** – begin to listen to different communities and ideas for former RSS. This will be the bulk of what will be facilitated during this phase, Phase 3.
3. **Co-develop solutions** – begin to set out future plans together with communities. This is also part of Phase 3.
4. **Invest and share benefits** – implementing and evaluating the engagement plan and the discussions coming out of the engagement planning process. Follow up communication and relationship maintenance are critical. This is part of Phase 4.

## Phase 4: Maintain the relationship through accountability

### **Determine community impact**

Community impact from engagement planning and engagement processes can be negative and/or positive. Either way there should be follow-up on the proposed solutions and how this will impact community. Consider the outcomes agreed to throughout the engagement and ask community how they have been impacted.

- *How was the community impacted by the engagement process, was it the way that was agreed upon?*
- *Did the engagement meet the outcomes?*
- *Were the agreements and plan maintained?*

### **Communication and follow-up**

Follow up with community and ask how they wish the relationship to be maintained and the best ways to communicate moving forward. Consider facilitating lessons learned sessions with groups.

- *How will the relationship be maintained?*
- *Will there be follow-up? When and how?*
- *Will there be lessons learned and shared?*

### **Establish a change process**

Consider how the operation and maintenance of the outcomes of the engagement will go in the first 1-2 years. Consider the steps involved to make future changes.

- *What if there are changes requested from the community?*
- *Is there new information to update the community?*
- *How will changes be processed?*



### **Acknowledgements and thank yous**

Ensure that those that helped with leading the project are thanked and acknowledged for their work. Go back to protocols and ceremonies and end the project in a way that is culturally appropriate to the community.

- *Who can you thank and acknowledge for their contributions?*
- *What ways will you show gratitude?*

### **Follow-up and check-ins**

Schedule regular check-ins with the community and the people you met. Ensure there are no outstanding conflicts or if there are conflicts, that they are addressed in a meaningful way. Consider what health supports were used throughout the engagement and how to ensure appropriate follow-up and availability afterward.

- *Are they likely to engage again in the future for other projects?*
- *What are the next steps?*
- *Can the community provide support through sponsorship or championing other projects you will be working on related to other RSS and buildings?*
- *Are there health supports that should be in place afterward?*
- *What are the appropriate ways to address any outstanding conflicts?*
- *How can a relationship be maintained in a meaningful way?*

## **Understanding and working with existing protocols**

The report has spoken about the importance of respecting protocols within the community. This section provides a summary of the themes that have been highlighted throughout the report thus far.

### **Approaching Elders**

Consider the appropriate protocol for approaching Elders. In all instances, it is important to be patient and listen and to speak only during pauses. Different cultures have different protocols for engaging Elders. This could be offering tobacco, offering cotton or visiting and having tea. You may consider reaching out to the Chief and Council or the Health and Social department for advice on the best way for meeting with Elders. When meeting with an Elder they may be soft spoken or some may be playful and use humor in storytelling. Be able to adjust based on the Elder you are engaging with.

### **Accessing and sharing traditional knowledge**

For many Indigenous nations, traditions are passed down through generations. Receiving traditional knowledge is considered sacred and it is important it remains respected. The creation stories, origin stories, ideologies, medicines, dances, art, etc. are vast and diverse. This is not something that is shared all at once or automatically, but over time by building trusted relationships and is earned based on the nature of the relationship. Traditional knowledge may be held across different people in the Nation or community. Not all information is documented, so it is important to listen and ask permission on how knowledge is shared.

### **Visiting in community**

What is deemed appropriate in each community changes. It is important to ask the best way to go about visiting. This may be at a community event, like Bingo or a hockey game, or a personal invitation to one's home. Personal visits could be planned through the band office staff. There may be a need for translators and Elders when planning visits.

### **Speaking with different genders**

Depending on the nation or community, there may be different protocols when it comes to speaking or meeting with male, female or two-spirited people. Ask the health department in the Nation about different cultural protocols to engage with different genders, children, and youth.

### **Public meetings**

There may be different protocols on how to post notices in the community. Nations may have different protocols for how various groups come together. It may be open to everyone or it may be more appropriate to separate certain groups. Consider the ceremonial aspects needed to help begin meeting in a good way.

### **Dealing with conflict**

Consider the protocols for dealing with conflict. As you build relationships it would be helpful to know who to help with confrontations. This may be an Elder or a respected leader in the community.

### **General Expected Behaviour**

In general, always be aware of your actions and behaviours that suit the social dynamics of the community. Gaining respect in the community is important to build trust. This can only happen overtime with patience and observing how you work with the community. Consider an appropriate dress code that is comfortable, modest and casual. Ask about the best way of dressing based on the occasion. Also be mindful of the protocols around traditional regalia and the rules practiced around engaging with people dressed in regalia, such as not touching regalia or taking photos unless permitted.

### **How to find protocols?**

The best place to start is to reach out to the community and or look on the website to see if protocols are already in place. If there is nothing listed, then begin by asking leadership the best way to engage in protocols. When in doubt, do not make assumptions, ask about protocol and the best way to respect people in the community. The appendix provides links to a handful of First Nations, Metis Nations and Inuit organizations who have listed protocols. This is a starting point and not exhaustive.

## Key takeaways

### **Co-development is key**

- You will notice in the above considerations that the plan is co-developed and is not determined before a relationship is built.

### **History of existing relationship**

- If you have a relationship established with certain communities and they are coming to ISC, ask them how they would like to engage.
- Share that you don't want to repeat past harms and do things "the same old way."
- The Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) is an example of how even with good intentions, there were many mistakes and in some cases, even more harm caused by not being prepared with the resources needed to support Survivors and their families.

### **Inclusion of off-site individuals**

- Not all people to be engaged will be living in the communities surrounding the sites. There may need to be engagements across Canada to gather information on certain RSS and buildings. Work with the communities of the traditional lands of the RSS to see where they are in the process and consider being a collaborative partner to help with connecting communities with Survivors from across the country.

### **Inter-departmental collaboration**

- Work with other Federal departments, like CIRNAC, to collaborate on strategies for engagement so that communities and leaders are not overburdened or overextended by Federal government requests. From a community perspective there may not be a separation between RSS, buildings, and land.

### **Diversity of protocols**

- It is important to note that there are diverse protocols and traditions used in the context of each First Nation, Metis or Inuit community. Therefore, it is essential to approach engagement with cultural sensitivity, respect, and humility and seek guidance from the appropriate leadership group or authority of the community you are seeking to engage. It is important to avoid generalizations and assumptions about their cultures and traditions.

### **Health and wellness**

- The Lessons Learned: Survivor Perspectives issued by the National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation spoke about the importance that the Cultural Advisory Committee played in supporting the Truth & Reconciliation Commissioners. This helped to ensure the respect for the protocols and cultural practices of each homeland that the Commissioners visited and were guided with the appropriate spiritual practices and language needs. It is important that local Elders dictate the appropriate protocols and ceremonies within the respective communities.

- There is a risk of retraumatization and as stated, therefore being trauma-informed is essential for any engagements to be successful. Examples could be filling out forms and providing assistance by working with the Health and Wellness department of the community so that people have the proper in-person guidance. There must be diverse forms of supports at all stages of the engagement process.

### **Indigenous Law & Governance**

- Indigenous law will intersect different jurisdictions including provincial and municipal borders.

## **Conclusion**

This report was prepared to provide a framework for ISC to develop engagement plans with Indigenous peoples and Residential School Survivors. Relationship building is the central theme throughout the report as a foundation for the future use or protection of former Residential School Sites and/or buildings. The 13 guideposts help to ground each phase of the engagement planning process and should serve as a checkpoint throughout every phase. While the report is written sequentially, the engagement planning process is circuitous and evolves as the relationship evolves. The best way to build relationships is to show authenticity, transparency, accountability and compassion. Trust takes time and should be cared for and nurtured overtime. Each community will be prepared and ready in their own way and ISC should serve as a collaborative resource to support solutions that will serve Survivors and the respective Nation(s) and surrounding communities. NCTR hopes that this is a starting point for ISC to begin planning engagements and this document will evolve as nuances and complexities surrounding RSS and buildings are shared with ISC.

# Appendix

## Examples of Protocols

[Tahltan Governance Handbook](#)

[Squamish Nation - Community Input](#)

[Metis Nation British Columbia Consultation Guidelines](#)

[Manitoba Metis Federation - Engagement & Consultation](#)

[Interim Statement of Principles on Métis Consultation and Accommodation and General Métis Framework for Consultation and Accommodation](#)

[Alderville First Nation Consultation Protocol](#)

[Consultation & Accommodation Documents - Metis Nation of Ontario](#)

[Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation - Department of Consultation & Accommodation](#)

[Town of Caledon: A Guide to Meaningful Engagement with Indigenous Neighbours](#)

[Consultation protocol with First Nations of Quebec and Labrador](#)

[First Nations in Quebec and Labrador Research Protocol](#)

[KWILMU'KW MAW-KLUSUAQN Consultation Process](#)

[Government of Nunavut - Culturally Appropriate Consultation Techniques](#)

[Vuntut Gwich'in First Nation Cultural Orientation and Protocols Toolkit](#)

[Ross River Dene First Nation Cultural Orientation and Protocols Toolkit](#)

[Consultation and Accommodation Protocol for Rama First Nation](#)

[Champagne & Aishihik First Nations Cultural Orientation and Protocols Toolkit](#)

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