

Indigenous Collaboration Policy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We recognize that our work, and the work of our member organizations, takes place on traditional Indigenous territories, of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, Six Nations of the Grand River and the Mississauga's of the Credit, First Nation. This territory is part of the Dish with One Spoon Treaty, an agreement between the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

This report would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of Indigenous Education and Student Services at Mohawk College, McMaster Indigenous Education Council, Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council, Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, and City of Hamilton's Manager of Indigenous Relations, Shelly Hill. We are deeply grateful for your time.

The Bay Area Climate Change Council (BACCC) recognizes and actively works to ensure Indigenous rights to data sovereignty by ensuring consent before, during, and after input is provided by our Indigenous partners, as is outlined in Article 19 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

BACKGROUND

BACCC is committed to responding to the climate crisis with policies that promote equity through the lens of a Just Transition. To further our commitment to inclusive work and in recognizing that we are all treaty people, BACCC decided to develop a framework to ensure its policy development process considers the perspectives of Indigenous partners. This work serves as a framework for future policy and advocacy work by BACCC. The collaboration policy is meant to be the first step in a long term relationship where Indigenous voices and climate-related initiatives are amplified and opportunities for collaboration are shared.

To inform this framework, BACCC staff reached out via email to multiple Indigenous organizations, councils, and nations to discuss a series of questions to help BACCC begin the process of developing an Indigenous Collaboration Policy. In addition to the one-on-one consultations, BACCC created a public virtual form and invited all residents of the cities of Hamilton and Burlington to share their feedback on the topic.

The discussion and action items listed herein reflect the feedback we received, as well as research reviewed by BACCC staff.

What We Heard

In our conversations and research, we heard a number of views and ideas for BACCC to consider.

For one, we heard that it is important for policy shaping organizations to go beyond simply acknowledging Indigenous rights, to integrating said rights within the policies we shape and recommend.¹ The application of this practice varies, depending on the policy topic and context.

Another suggestion we heard, across numerous conversations, was the importance of respecting what is sometimes referred to as Indigenous 'data sovereignty'.

"Data Sovereignty is the right of Indigenous peoples to determine the means of collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of data pertaining to Indigenous people from whom it has been derived, or to whom it relates."- Kukutai & Taylor²

Several methods of declaring and supporting Indigenous ownership of their feedback and stories were provided during the consultation process, including acknowledgment, attribution, explicit and informed consent, and allowing contributors to review and ensure accurate representation of their contributions prior to publication.

We also heard it is important to acknowledge and reflect the diversity of Indigenous peoples and nations, instead of creating the impression of homogeneity. We were told that the Bay Area Climate Change Council should not shy away from presenting diverse perspectives that may arise from speaking with several Indigenous individuals or communities. Sharing these multiple perspectives from different places of experience and understanding should aid in painting a more holistic picture. To that effect, representatives of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council expressed a desire for BACCC to stop all forms of advocacy moving forward. In an attempt to find common ground, BACCC offered further context for its work and asked how a relationship could be formed.

Finally, we heard about the need for reciprocity with Indigenous partners, to avoid one sided exchanges. In particular, we heard suggestions about how to create long term relationships, instead of relying on temporary and sporadic discussions.

¹ Decolonizing Climate Policy in Canada - Indigenous Climate Action ([link](#))

² Kukutai & Taylor - Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Towards an Agenda (2016) from A First Nations Data Governance Strategy by FNIGC ([link](#))

Summary:

1. Go beyond simply acknowledging Indigenous rights, to integrating said rights within the policies we shape and recommend
2. Respect Indigenous data sovereignty
3. Acknowledge and reflect the diversity of Indigenous peoples and nations, instead of creating the impression of homogeneity.
4. Promote reciprocity by creating long term relationships with Indigenous peoples, instead of relying on temporary and sporadic discussions

Actions Taken

BACCC has taken a number of steps already, in light of what we heard, detailed in this section below. These steps are meant to be the first of many, with future commitments outlined in the following section.

Actions taken by the Bay Area Climate Change Council:

1. Offered Indigenous-led cultural capacity training to BACCC staff and all BACCC members, as per Action #57 of the Truth and Reconciliation Report³
2. Developed an acknowledgement for Indigenous data sovereignty, to include in published reports.
3. Began the process of creating long term relationships with local Indigenous partners, based on reciprocity.
4. Took steps to maximize the ability of Indigenous peoples to exercise self-determination by extending council membership to the Hamilton Regional Indian Centre.

Commitments

Herein, we commit that BACCC will:

1. **Seek out and include Indigenous perspectives in all policy documents moving forward.**⁴ Regardless of whether or not community-wide public consultation is part of a report's planned methodology, Indigenous consultation will always be completed.
2. **The following process will be followed to seek consent in sharing Indigenous perspectives and knowledge:**
 - At the beginning of the policy process, prior to forming draft recommendations, BACCC will offer to set up meetings with the Indigenous partners who have agreed to work with us. BACCC will also put out a public notice calling for anyone identifying as Indigenous to participate, at the beginning of the work.

³ Truth and Reconciliation Commission Reports ([link](#))

⁴ All policy documents refers to formal policy reports and white papers.

- At the established meetings, BACCC staff will provide relevant information on the project and seek explicit consent to share feedback. At this time, staff will also explain the project's next steps and the 'infinite revision principle'.
- 3. Follow the infinite revision principle**, where Indigenous partners who consent to work with BACCC on a policy document are permitted to revoke their consent or ensure their views are properly reflected, at any time.
 - Prior to publication, BACCC staff will confirm and seek revisions from Indigenous partners.
 - After publication, BACCC staff will update the document upon request from its Indigenous partners. In this situation, BACCC staff will provide public notice of the updated document and send it to the partners who requested the change. BACCC commits to completing these revisions in an efficient and timely manner.
 - 4. Always include an acknowledgement in policy documents moving forward**, of Indigenous partners who contribute, of Indigenous heritage and treaty rights, and of data sovereignty rights.
 - 5. Present the diverse perspectives of Indigenous partners in policy documents**, with attribution where requested.

This serves as a framework for future policy and advocacy work by BACCC. The collaboration policy is meant to be the first step in a long term relationship where Indigenous voices and climate-related initiatives are amplified and opportunities for collaboration are shared. The policy is a living document, subject to later changes as we evolve our partnerships.

APPENDIX

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the United Nations in 2007. UNDRIP “establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples”.

“States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.” -Article 19, UNDRIP ⁵

Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Call to Action #57:

We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to provide education to public servants on the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism.⁶

⁵ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ([link](#))

⁶ Truth and Reconciliation Commission Reports ([link](#))