

Indigenous Data Sovereignty

An introduction to the principles and practices of data sovereignty & governance by and for Indigenous Peoples.



WHAT IS INDIGENOUS DATA SOVEREIGNTY?

Indigenous Data Sovereignty (or, Indigenous Data Governance) is the concept which asserts that Indigenous peoples have an inherent right to control the data and information associated with their cultural and intellectual heritage, knowledge systems, protocol and practices, lands, resources, and lifeways.

Indigenous nations maintain the right to self-determine the parameters of what, when, where, why, and how their data is collected, stored, accessed, and shared.



THE IMPORTANCE OF DATA SOVEREIGNTY

Indigenous Data Sovereignty ensures:

- the **self-determination** of Indigenous communities
- the **protection** of Indigenous cultural heritage and knowledge systems
- **ethical data collection** and dissemination by and for Indigenous communities
- **equitable and accessible representation** of Indigenous peoples and experiences



FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN CANADA

Within so-called Canada, the data of Indigenous peoples has been historically over-collected with varying degrees of effort made towards quality and consistency. Critical data has also been made inaccessible to Indigenous communities in acts of ongoing colonial violence. Not only is this a weaponization of data, but this also creates complex issues for communities and individuals, especially as it pertains to the reporting processes required by the federal government to access funding and other services.



FRAMEWORKS & PRINCIPLES

Various Indigenous organizations, collectives, and communities have formed to define various strategies, frameworks, principles, and approaches to ensuring and maintaining Indigenous data sovereignty, such as:

- **CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance**
(Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, Ethics)
Global Indigenous Data Alliance
- **The First Nations Principles of OCAP®**
(Ownership, Control, Access, Possession)
The First Nations Information Governance Centre



DATA SOVREIGNTY IN PRACTICE

As Indigenous peoples are global and diverse, there will be many approaches and outcomes to data sovereignty based on community needs, contexts, and priorities. Indigenous-led data sovereignty initiatives continue to support:

- Community empowerment & development
- Rematriation & language revitalization
- Climate action & land stewardship
- Education & research



RESPECTFUL ENGAGEMENT

If you are conducting research or collecting data which includes information about Indigenous communities and their knowledges, consider the following actions to ensure respectful engagement:

- **Familiarize** yourself with relevant data sovereignty frameworks and proper cultural protocols
- **Acknowledge** the rightful owners of data, cultural, and intellectual property
- **Promote** community-led and community-authored data and research initiatives