



RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

by and for Urban Indigenous People in Quebec



REGROUPEMENT
DES CENTRES D'AMITIÉ
AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC



This document is the product of collective work drawing on the expertise and knowledge of a diverse group of people, both young and old, from different cities and Nations. We would like to thank all those who participated in the reflection, development and revision processes for this *Research Framework by and for Urban Indigenous People in Quebec*.

Wela'in
Miikwech
Woiwon
Migwetc
Tshinashkumitin
Nia:wen
Nakurmik
Merci
Mik8etc
Tiawenhk
Wliwni
Chiniskumitin
Thank you

Revision and translation: **Zozita: translation & editing**
Translation from Indigenous languages: **La Boîte Rouge VIF**
Graphic design: **Roger Ortiz**

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Sharing

Create space for our voices to be expressed

Humility and Kindness

Support social justice

Document social Injustice

Pride

Doing things the right way

LEARNING

"We need to establish genuine relationships."

"We are all teachers and learners."





IN MEMORY OF FRANCE ROBERTSON

The Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) would like to pay tribute to France Robertson, an Innu woman from Mashteuiatsh, whose hard work within our Movement helped ensure that this Research Framework could be created. This project was very dear to her heart.

France passed away on October 17, 2018, at the age of 47. A strong, compassionate woman and a positive leader, she had been the executive director of the Lanaudière Native Friendship Centre since 2012. She was also actively involved in the RCAAQ's board of directors.

France had a knack for working hand-in-hand with partners and building bridges.

Along with her joy, her contagious laugh, her determination and her dedication, France Robertson will be remembered for her commitment to the mission of the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement.

It is with pride and deep affection that we dedicate the Research Framework to her memory.



THE REGROUPEMENT DES CENTRES D'AMITIÉ AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC

Founded in 1976, the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) is the provincial association that represents and coordinates the Native Friendship Centres established in Quebec urban areas with significant Indigenous presence.

All the Native Friendship Centres affiliated with the RCAAQ share the mission to improve the quality of life of urban Indigenous people, promote culture and build bridges between peoples. In addition to being true frontline service hubs for Indigenous people in cities, these centres are incubators for initiatives that value culture, affirm identity and foster citizen involvement.

The RCAAQ, with its historical foundations and provincial scope, is a key representative on issues related to urban Indigenous life. In this regard, the RCAAQ has been working for many years to document the evolution of Indigenous needs, as well as the impact of the Friendship Centres' actions within urban communities, in a significant and effective way. Through its research and assessment activities, the RCAAQ aims to contribute to a better understanding of the Indigenous presence in urban areas in Quebec. It also helps develop tangible solutions and innovative public policies for the well-being of First Nations and Inuit who are established or passing through cities in Quebec.

¹ This document uses the invariable term "Inuit" as it is used in Inuktitut.





DEFINITIONS

Assessment or evaluation:

A research process that is usually specific and time bound, and that meets the needs of an organization in terms of planning and management. Research methods are used to document a group's needs, to verify a project's progress toward the desired changes, to measure the impacts of a service or to encourage a collective reflection by those involved in a pilot project in order to continuously improve it. Evaluation can help identify learning points that can be integrated over the longer term and best practices that can be replicated. In community settings, participatory evaluation is prioritized because it encourages a commitment and involvement from work teams and community members.

Centre or Friendship Centre:

Quebec Native Friendship Centre or other urban Indigenous community organization affiliated with the RCAAQ and part of the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement.

Joint research agreement:

A document that provides a formal summary of the rights, responsibilities and shared expectations of the collaborating parties involved in the research, including methods, copyright and access to data. It is a research and governance tool to ensure fair and respectful collaboration. Negotiation and cooperation around the terms of this agreement can begin before the first research activities or, better still, before funding applications are started. The final document must be understood and signed by both parties.

Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement, or the Movement:

Covers urban Indigenous community organizations, including the Friendship Centres and the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ), as well as all Indigenous people associated with the Centres. The common mission of all those involved in the Movement is to improve the quality of life of urban Indigenous people, to promote Indigenous cultures and to foster the harmonious coexistence of peoples in the cities of Quebec.

Research:

A scientific process designed to produce new knowledge. Research involves recognizing and incorporating existing knowledge, collecting and analyzing data, and disseminating new knowledge. This process draws on qualitative methods (testimonies, life stories, discussions) and quantitative methods (questionnaires, surveys, statistics) and can take a variety of forms, including evaluation, consultation and focus group among key participants. Research strengthens the capacities and enhances the knowledge of those involved. It also allows a detailed and rigorous record to be made of reality, which includes the experiences, needs and perspectives of participants.

Research protocol:

A complete description of a research project, including the goals and objectives, methodology, benefits and risks to participants, manner of disseminating results, etc.

Two-eyed seeing:

The principle of "two-eyed seeing" has been put forward by Canadian Indigenous leaders, including Mi'kmaq Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall. In the Mi'kmaq language, two-eyed seeing, or Etuaptmu'k, means learning to see from one eye with the strength of Indigenous knowledge, and from the other eye with the strength of Western knowledge.

Urban Indigenous community:

A diverse community of people who share an Indigenous (First Nations or Inuit) identity and the experience of living, be it temporarily or permanently, in the same city. Urban Indigenous communities include community organizations created by and for Indigenous people, which provide a meeting place and access to services in the city. The sense of belonging to an urban Indigenous community can vary from city to city and from person to person, and it can coexist with the sense of belonging to a territorial Indigenous community.

Urban Indigenous organization:

In this document, the organizations concerned are the Friendship Centres and their provincial association (the RCAAQ), all of which are nonprofit community organizations.





WHY PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR URBAN INDIGENOUS RESEARCH?

In recognition of a growing urban Indigenous population facing complex challenges, the Regroupement des centres d'amitié autochtones du Québec (RCAAQ) sees research as a major opportunity to contribute to a better knowledge and understanding of the reality of Indigenous people in cities and thus support the mission of our Movement. It is important to recognize that the colonial history of scientific research has left a legacy of mistrust within Indigenous communities, who have too often been considered passive subjects. In this context, the active participation of Indigenous people in research projects that concern them, the recognition of Indigenous knowledge and the decolonization of research methodologies are now essential.

Echoing the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as the many calls to action, recommendations and calls for justice made following the commissions of inquiry, there is now a shift in the position of a growing number of research institutions and scholars in Canada. Indeed, the recognition of the rights of Indigenous peoples and the general willingness to move toward reconciliation are increasingly influencing the way Indigenous research is designed, funded and conducted. However, these invitations to decolonization and equity still too often result in superficial changes that do not allow for a real transformation of research methodologies and ways of working in collaboration and co-construction with Indigenous people. Thus, in recent years, several Indigenous institutions, communities and organizations have produced research protocols and guidelines based on their values and vision, with the goal of participating more actively in research and repairing the still-visible consequences of an unfair colonial relationship in this field (AFNQL 2014; FNIGC 2014; ITK 2007; KSDPP 2007; OFIFC 2016).

It is in this general context that the RCAAQ wishes to provide a framework for Indigenous research in urban settings. The present research framework responds to a shared desire to see our rights recognized and our vision asserted and to make our voices heard through the research projects in which we participate.

It provides clear guidelines for organizations outside our Movement to allow us to carry out research together based on fair collaboration and genuine co-construction. It is also designed to support and guide our urban Indigenous organizations that are solicited for research or that want to lead their own research or evaluation projects, so that we can make informed choices and thus benefit as much as possible from the process of producing and disseminating new knowledge.

In short, this framework is a reference tool that we can use collectively to ensure that research is developed, conducted and directed in a meaningful way by, for and with urban Indigenous people in Quebec.

“How will our words and our knowledge be used?
Will It help our community?
Will the knowledge come back and will we recognize it if it does?”





WHO SHOULD USE THIS FRAMEWORK AND WHEN?

The *Research Framework by and for Urban Indigenous People in Quebec* aims to improve research practices and to:

- Strengthen the research skills and autonomy of urban Indigenous organizations, including Friendship Centres and the RCAAQ
- Restore Indigenous people's trust in the scientific research community by doing research that is based on fair collaboration and equal relationships
- Ensure that research benefits urban Indigenous people and their organizations

It is useful for the following people:

- Indigenous people who are permanently or temporarily living in urban areas and who are participating in a research project at one of the Quebec Native Friendship Centres
- Urban Indigenous organizations, including Friendship Centres and the RCAAQ, and their members and teams
- Researchers, students, research groups, and academic or private ethics committees
- Anyone affected by urban Indigenous research

It applies in the following contexts:

- **When the RCAAQ and the Friendship Centres carry out an independent research project.**
Valid for any research, evaluation or consultation project, initiated and developed by and for urban Indigenous people, managed by a Friendship Centre or the RCAAQ, without an external collaborator
e.g. Assessment of the needs of a Friendship Centre's members or provincial consultation on an issue
- **When the RCAAQ and the Friendship Centres are the coordinators and managers of a research project involving external partners.**
As above, except with external collaborators whose expertise is deemed essential to the successful completion of one or more stages of the project.
e.g. Development of a collaborative research project to evaluate and monitor overall well-being services in a Centre, in partnership with health researchers
- **When the RCAAQ and the Friendship Centres are actors, collaborators or partners in a research project that is managed outside the Native Friendship Centre Movement.**
Valid for any research, evaluation or consultation project managed by a researcher or an organization external to the Movement, and which solicits the participation of a Friendship Centre or the RCAAQ as a participant, partner or collaborator.
e.g. A university research team hired by a government department solicits the RCAAQ as well as other Indigenous organizations to co-construct a project and guide the process on the ground





OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES



Our principles reflect the values of the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement and the cultural richness of urban Indigenous people. They imply a willingness on the part of researchers to experiment with different and innovative ways of conducting research.

These ethical foundations help guide urban Indigenous research so it remains on the right path throughout the process.

Recognition

The Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement works for recognition of research's colonial history. It also advocates for concrete measures to promote reconciliation and social transformation through research. Furthermore, Indigenous people must be at the centre of research projects about them, and their essential contribution must be recognized. To do this, it is important that the expertise, experiences, values, skills and ways of being of Indigenous people not only be respected, but also valued and foregrounded at every stage of the research process.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a core value of Indigenous relationship building. It reflects the interconnection, equality, balance and harmony that are central to Indigenous worldviews. The principle of reciprocity underlies our desire to transform research from being about Indigenous people to being by, for and with Indigenous people. Reciprocity-based research is about ongoing collaboration on an equal basis. It offers benefits, interests and learning opportunities both for Indigenous participants and for researchers, each being simultaneously bearers and creators of knowledge.

Agency

Agency, or the power to act, is one of the essential principles of the movement and struggle of Indigenous peoples to achieve autonomy and community well-being. It involves individual and collective processes that strengthen the capacity and confidence people need to shape their own futures, propose their own solutions and bring about the world they wish to see. In the context of research by and for urban Indigenous people, this principle contributes to the emergence of a new generation of Indigenous researchers. It also supports our organizations in achieving greater autonomy in research and evaluation. This principle also helps us persist in working to erase conventional distinctions or dichotomies between academic and community-based research, and between non-Indigenous and Indigenous participants in research.

Pertinence

Research should be useful, culturally relevant and meaningful to urban Indigenous communities and organizations. In Friendship Centres, everyone works daily to meet the complex, numerous and sometimes urgent needs of community members. The time and energy invested in research projects must contribute to our mission of improving the living conditions of urban Indigenous people and fostering closer ties between peoples. In concrete terms, pertinent research must serve to fill knowledge gaps on urban Indigenous realities and support the individual and collective aspirations of urban Indigenous people. It must also guide our Movement by suggesting effective solutions to challenges observed on the ground and by impulsing continuous improvement.



OUR ACTION FOCUS AREAS

Action focus areas have been formulated to implement the four principles chosen by the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement to guide research. These focus areas explain concretely how research by, for and with urban Indigenous people must be planned, developed, carried out and oriented.



The diversity of Indigenous knowledge and expertise is recognized and respected.

EXPLANATION

Research must foster respectful recognition of the knowledge, expertise, experience, values, skills and ways of being of the Indigenous people participating, without essentializing them. Each project must also consider the cultural and social diversity that exists within urban Indigenous communities. When a research project takes place in a city built on traditional Indigenous territory, the specificity of this territory should also be taken into account, if relevant.

Non-Indigenous researchers have a responsibility to understand and respect the worldview and knowledge of Indigenous people.

In turn, the value of Western scientific knowledge is also recognized.

APPLICATION

- The RCAAQ and Friendship Centres may require that researchers receive training on urban Indigenous realities and issues before beginning the research process, or during the process if a challenge is encountered.
- Decolonized, participatory and community-based methodological approaches are adopted in order to respect Indigenous worldviews, rhythms, means of expression, strengths and challenges.
- As experts in urban Indigenous realities, Indigenous participants are systematically invited to collaborate with the research team in interpreting data and validating results.
- The principle of “two-eyed seeing” —learning to see from one eye with the strength of Indigenous knowledge, and from the other eye with the strength of Western knowledge—is reflected in the research hypotheses, in methodology and in the co-construction of results. There is no hierarchy between the two kinds of knowledge; instead, they are seen as complementary forces that can enrich each other.
- Elders and other knowledge keepers are involved when possible and pertinent.





Urban Indigenous communities and organizations are actively involved.

EXPLANATION

Whether for an independent project by a Friendship Centre or the RCAAQ, or a collaborative research project, the urban Indigenous community must be actively involved in all stages of research. In addition, the research must allow Indigenous people to have their voices heard and to express their points of view at every stage, from project development to result validation.

In the case of a collaborative research project, the partners (Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, scientists and experts on the realities on the ground) must have an equal relationship. Knowledge is co-constructed and co-produced by all partners on a basis of honesty and respect. In such cases, it is mandatory that partners sign a joint research agreement that details all aspects of the collaboration, including ethical aspects.

APPLICATION

- The nature and extent of participation by each of the communities and urban Indigenous organizations is clearly specified.
- The joint research agreement describes how the urban Indigenous communities and organizations will be involved at all stages of the research. This includes their means of participation, action and control regarding data collection methods, knowledge production, dissemination of results and subsequent use of the data. The composition of the research team, the decision-making process and the plans in case of disagreement are also described in the agreement.
- A reflexive approach is taken, meaning that the research team takes care to avoid any power imbalance and, if necessary, corrects it during the process.
- The dissemination of results highlights the essential contribution of the Indigenous people to the research project, for example by co-authoring a report or article or by making joint public scientific presentations.

The process is useful and pertinent to the Quebec Native Friendship Centre Movement.

EXPLANATION

The research project must address the needs and priorities identified on the ground in order to be pertinent and useful to the urban Indigenous communities and organizations involved.

The project must also be developed in a way that reflects the local context and the particularities on the ground. This is to ensure that the research is a help, not a hindrance, for the Friendship Centres involved.

In the longer term, the research project must support the RCAAQ's mission to improve the living conditions of urban Indigenous people and to promote harmony between peoples by promoting Indigenous cultures.

APPLICATION

- Research needs and priorities are identified by the Friendship Centres and the RCAAQ, locally and provincially, and this information may be shared with researchers outside the Friendship Centre Movement upon request.
- Urban Indigenous organizations may submit a research project for ethical review (according to this Framework) or for strategic review in terms of its usefulness and pertinence. If the review is positive, a research agreement can be drafted jointly.
- In the case of joint research, the usefulness of the research project and its benefits to Indigenous people and Friendship Centres should be clearly explained in the research agreement, which serves as a contract with external collaborators or partners.

For example, the research might contribute to a better understanding of urban Indigenous realities, help consolidate and promote the Centres' expertise, foster the ongoing improvement of services, strengthen internal research capacities or enrich the skills of young members of urban communities.
- The research project's timeline and deadlines should be flexible.





Participants' rights, well-being, and free and informed consent are protected.

EXPLANATION

The RCAAQ applies ethical supervision mechanisms that guarantee the protection of the participants' personal information and anonymity.

Researchers are obliged to obtain individual, free and informed consent from participants. Consent is always based on transparency and mutual understanding. It is valid only for the project as described and does not cover any subsequent secondary use of the data, unless the consent form clearly states this.

At any time (even after the research has been completed), participants have the right to withdraw their individual consent. In addition, the Friendship Centres involved have the right to review the use of the data at any time. They may collectively withdraw the consent of all participants who are members of an urban Indigenous community and who have previously authorized their Friendship Centre to do so.

In the case of a research project in partnership with the university community, the existence of a research ethics committee at the researcher's institution does not exempt the project from ethical supervision by the RCAAQ.

Finally, all possible measures must be taken to minimize any secondary or harmful effects of the research process on the participants.



APPLICATION

- The consent form is clear, complete, accurate and easy for participants to understand.
- Oral explanations are given in the participants' preferred language to ensure they are understood.
- The right to withdraw individual and collective consent is clearly stated in the consent form and orally explained to participants.
- In the case of joint research, the agreement must specify how access to participants' data and personal information is shared, in whole or in part, with urban Indigenous organizations.
- According to their skills and interests, Indigenous participants must be offered the opportunity to be involved in the validation and dissemination of the results, and their essential contribution must be highlighted.
- At the end of the research project, external collaborators must destroy the participants' confidential information and personal data provided by the Friendship Centres, subject to verification by the RCAAQ.
- If the research project is likely to trigger trauma for participants, immediate access to support and healing services must be provided. Services must be consistent with the needs of the participants and a holistic vision of well-being, and this must be determined in advance by the Indigenous organizations and participants themselves.
- The trust relationship between a community member and the Friendship Centre's team should never be challenged by a research activity.





The collective rights, autonomy and intellectual property of urban Indigenous communities and organizations are protected.

EXPLANATION

At all times, Indigenous organizations have the right to review the research projects they participate in. Moreover, the RCAAQ and the Friendship Centres apply strict rules to protect the research data and oversee how it is used.

The research team is obliged to obtain organizational consent from all Indigenous organizations involved in the project, which in turn have the right to withdraw their organizational consent.

In addition, researchers, participants and urban Indigenous organizations involved in a research project must agree in advance on their expectations regarding data confidentiality, retention and use, and intellectual property ownership of results.

To safeguard participants' individual rights, preference is given to the holding and retention of data by Indigenous organizations themselves. This could be the RCAAQ or the Friendship Centre, if the organization has adopted the present research framework for its internal policies and has demonstrated a satisfactory ability to do so.

In all cases, physical access to the anonymized research data is guaranteed to participating Indigenous organizations at all times and regardless of where the data are held.

Any secondary use of the data should be supervised and authorized by the urban Indigenous organizations that own the data to protect data integrity and to honour the principle of control in Indigenous research.

Finally, researchers must respect the collective rights of Indigenous peoples to preserve their knowledge and cultural heritage, as well as the collective intellectual ownership of knowledge that is learned, transmitted, produced and used collectively.

APPLICATION

- The process of ethical supervision is designed not to constitute a heavy workload for urban Indigenous organizations.
- Urban Indigenous organizations are provided with an assessment form that allows them to determine whether the project conforms to the present research framework, helping them to decide whether to participate in the research project.
- In the case of collaborative research, the joint agreement remains in effect after the research is completed in all matters relating to the use, control and possession of data and materials collected during the research.
- Where applicable, withdrawal of organizational consent results in the withdrawal of the collective consent of participants who were recruited through a Centre or the RCAAQ.
- The research agreement clearly states the terms covering confidentiality protection; retention, access and possession of research data; use of secondary data; and intellectual ownership of results.
- Urban Indigenous organizations must do everything necessary to ensure that the research data they hold is protected according to the same ethical standards as in the academic community and in compliance with this research framework.
- The RCAAQ provides secure data storage space for Centres that do not have the infrastructure and policies to do so suitably.
- Collective ownership of intellectual property is favoured: the RCAAQ and Friendship Centres can collectively represent a lead investigator or coresearcher and thus be considered a collective author of a research report or of scientific articles.

“Indigenous research is based on relational accountability.”
(Wilson, 2008)





The process strengthens urban Indigenous organizations' capacity and autonomy.

EXPLANATION

The research must contribute to strengthening the capacities, skills and autonomy of Indigenous people and urban Indigenous organizations, while promoting mutual learning within the research team.

To do this, researchers must:

- Appropriately identify the experts in urban realities, the Elders and the Indigenous knowledge and culture keepers who are to be part of the research team
- Involve Indigenous participants and Friendship Centre staff in the various stages of the research, so they can learn by observing and doing
- Support Indigenous education and training through research
- Act in a way that complements the research skills and capacity already present within urban Indigenous organizations
- Ensure that the knowledge resulting from research is mobilized and used within urban Indigenous communities in the best possible way

APPLICATION

- The research project includes activities that strengthen collective research capacity and skills, for example through training workshops or internships, and a sufficient budget is provided for this purpose.
- The research project ensures that Indigenous research assistants, ideally young people from urban Indigenous communities, are employed and trained, and that they are remunerated for their essential contribution as experts on urban Indigenous realities.
- The research project ensures that the unique knowledge, skills and expertise of Elders and Indigenous knowledge and cultures keepers, identified as such within the Friendship Centre Movement, are valued.
- The research agreement clearly specifies the benefits to the participating urban Indigenous organizations in terms of strengthening their capacities and autonomy in research and evaluation.
- Every opportunity is taken to raise awareness of the research among members of urban Indigenous communities and to foster the creation of a new generation of Indigenous researchers in Quebec.

This research framework has been approved by the RCAAQ. All the affiliated Friendship Centres have contributed to its development and are encouraged to use it to guide their participation in research.

The tools that accompany it are dynamic; they can therefore be updated or modified. To access these tools, simply make a request to the RCAAQ.

“I would like all our stories to be recognized and respected. It’s our identity. It’s part of who we are.”





THE STAGES OF RESEARCH

To respect our principles and guidelines, the research project team should take all the following steps:

1. Review of this Research Framework by and for Urban Indigenous People in Quebec.
2. Review of the literature on urban Indigenous realities or the readings recommended by the RCAAQ.
3. Initial meeting to assess the possibility of collaboration between urban Indigenous organizations and other partners if applicable.
4. Development of the research project in collaboration with the participating Indigenous organizations and based on pre-established research priorities.
5. Drafting of a document that explains the research project.
6. Review of the research's pertinence by the urban Indigenous organizations and approval with or without conditions.
7. Researcher training on the urban Indigenous setting and community-based research, if applicable.
8. Drafting of the research agreement and its appendices (e.g. individual consent forms for research participants; confidentiality, data retention and intellectual property protocols) and approval of these documents by the research team, which includes representatives of the participating urban Indigenous organizations.
9. Recruitment and possible training of collaborators and research assistants with expertise in Indigenous realities.
10. Data collection.
11. Data processing and analysis.
12. Validation and enrichment of data analysis with participants and urban Indigenous community members involved in the project.
13. Drafting and preparation of materials for publication, knowledge translation and outreach (with feedback from urban Indigenous communities).
14. Use of research results by urban Indigenous organizations and the wider public (knowledge mobilization and application).
15. Feedback and identification of new research needs.

As the process of knowledge production is dynamic and generally nonlinear, it is possible to go back to earlier steps and thus approach the research steps in a circular way.

“ It would be good if research could help us share our knowledge and our stories with the youth, our future leaders.”





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RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

by and for Urban Indigenous People in Quebec



APPENDICES

- I. Template: Form for assessing the pertinence of a research project
- II. Template: Letter of approval of a research project
- III. Template: Joint research agreement
- IV. Template: Individual and group consent form - Participants
- V. Template: Organization consent form - Urban Indigenous organization
- VI. Template: Confidentiality agreement
- VII. Template: Attestation of the deletion of data

*The RCAAQ can share these templates upon request.



REGROUPEMENT
DES CENTRES D'AMITIÉ
AUTOCHTONES DU QUÉBEC