

INDIGENOUS-LED ADVISORY STRUCTURES

A WISE PRACTICES RESOURCE

NOVEMBER 2025



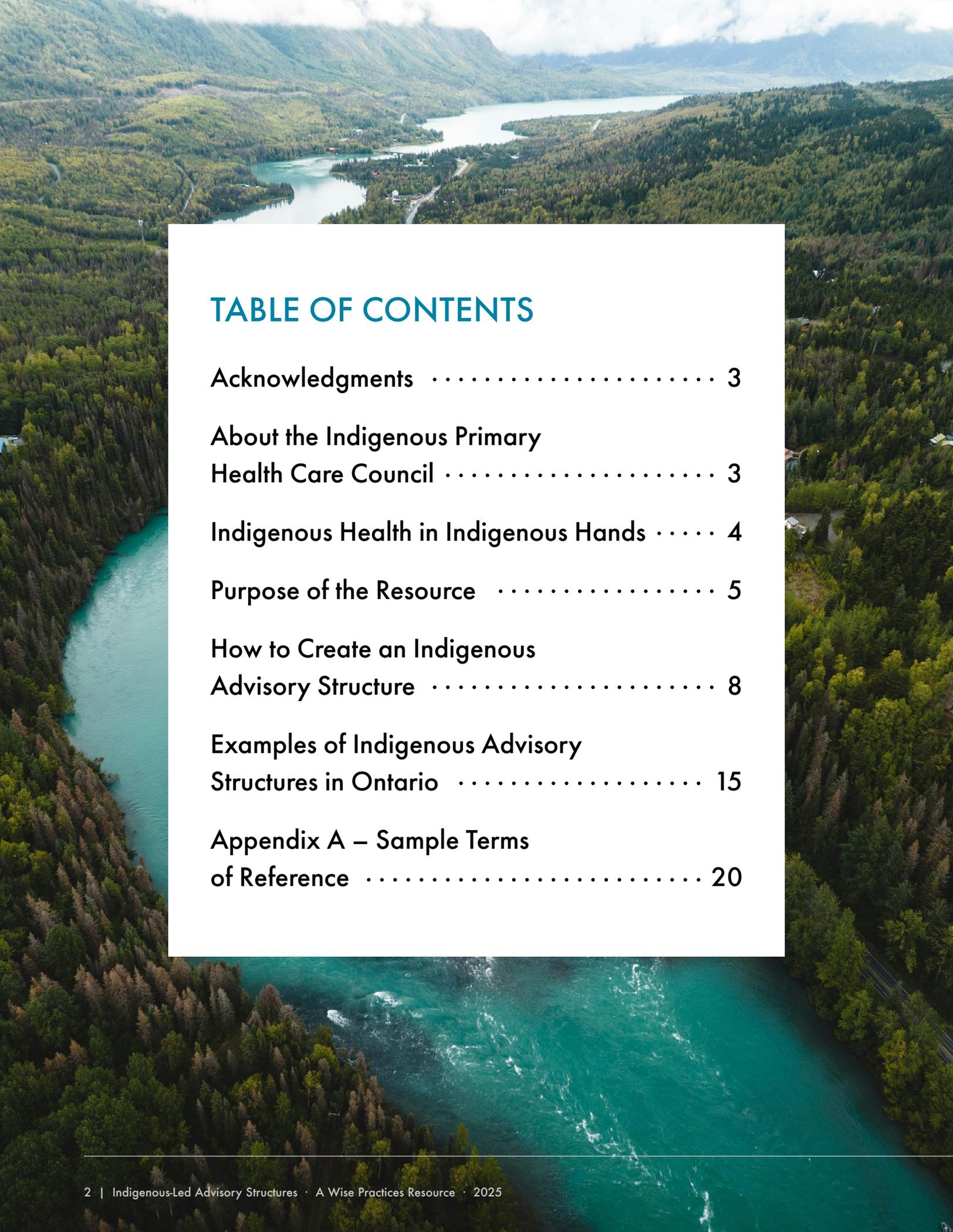


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ABOUT THE INDIGENOUS PRIMARY HEALTH CARE COUNCIL

The Indigenous Primary Health Care Council (IPHCC) is an Indigenous governed, culture-based, and Indigenous-informed organization with the key mandate to support the advancement and evolution of Indigenous primary health care service provision and planning throughout Ontario. IPHCC works alongside over 20 member organizations in nearly 50 locations across the province. Collectively, the sector serves over 100,000 First Nations, Inuit, and Métis (FNIM) clients in urban, rural, remote, and on-territory (reserve) settings.

INDIGENOUS HEALTH IN INDIGENOUS HANDS

IPHCC promotes high quality care provision through Indigenous Health in Indigenous Hands with traditional knowledge, traditional healing practices, and self-determination as central to restoring balance at the individual, familial, and community levels. Systems that serve FNIM communities must be Indigenous governed, placing FNIM leaders at the centre of all decisions about Indigenous health and well-being. Indigenous Health in Indigenous Hands means that Indigenous Peoples hold full authority over their own health decisions, systems, and resources. It recognizes that communities define what health looks like for them, how it is governed, delivered, and sustained, based on their own knowledge systems, values, and lived experiences.

This approach is grounded in the inherent right to self-determination affirmed through the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and Aboriginal and Treaty Rights. Upholding Indigenous Health in Indigenous Hands is both a pathway to healing and an act of reclamation and resistance.



PURPOSE OF THE RESOURCE

This resource is intended to support organizations in establishing, strengthening, and sustaining Indigenous advisory structures. These structures provide a meaningful way for organizations to put self-determination into practice within the health system. When Indigenous advisory circles are led by communities and grounded in their priorities, they create formal pathways for Indigenous governance and decision-making that shape policy, program design, and service delivery.

Rooted in Ontario's evolving health system, this guide offers practical approaches grounded in Indigenous self-determination, cultural integrity, and equitable partnership. It aims to ensure that Indigenous voices are not only represented but meaningfully embedded in health system planning, delivery, and decision-making.

The guide draws on culturally grounded, community-led practices that support equitable, holistic healthcare that is responsive to the needs and values of the community it serves. It helps organizations:

- **Support Indigenous voices** by embedding Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and leadership across all stages of health system transformation
- **Minimize consultation burdens** by offering models that respect community time, capacity, and self-determination
- **Provide actionable guidance** for creating or strengthening Indigenous advisory structures

This guide complements IPHCC's [First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Community Engagement Guide](#), which focuses on building respectful and reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities. Together, these resources offer a holistic approach to advancing Indigenous inclusion, leadership, and self-determination in health governance.

Note: This resource is not intended to replace existing relationships or protocols already in place. The information in this guide is provided for information purposes and does not constitute legal or professional advice or define a singular path for engagement.

What Do Indigenous Advisory Structures Do?

Indigenous advisory structures, also known as advisory circles or councils, are community-driven bodies that guide organizations in delivering culturally safe and equitable services for Indigenous Peoples. They ensure that Indigenous voices, knowledge systems, and priorities inform decisions that impact their communities. These structures advance reconciliation and self-determination by addressing systemic barriers and health inequities, serving as bridges between communities and the health system to keep Indigenous Health in Indigenous Hands.

In health settings, Indigenous advisory structures may:

- Review and co-develop health programs, policies, and strategies, as well as provide recommendations for implementation.
- Advise on culturally safer service delivery and patient care.
- Identify gaps and advocate for priorities identified by Indigenous communities.
- Support Indigenous governance in health systems transformation.



Key Features of Indigenous Advisory Structures

Indigenous-Led or Co-Led: Membership is primarily made up of Indigenous people, often including Elders, Knowledge Holders, health professionals, and representatives from local communities or Indigenous organizations.

Culturally Grounded: These structures reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and being, including wholistic approaches to health, ceremony, storytelling, and consensus-building.

Reflective of Communities Served: The advisory structures are designed based on the strengths and needs of the communities being served, whether they are urban, rural, or on-reserve. FNIM people have unique cultures, ceremonies and beliefs, meaning, there is no one-size-fits-all and members should be reflective of those differences.

Not Tokenistic: These roles go beyond symbolic consultation. Members should be involved from the beginning and consistently throughout the decision-making process with shared responsibilities.

Relational and Reciprocal: Advisory structures thrive when organizations invest time, respect Indigenous protocols, and remain accountable to the communities involved.

Indigenous Health in Indigenous Hands: Indigenous Peoples have full authority over their own health decisions, systems, and resources.

Assessing Need and Avoiding Duplication

Indigenous community members are often asked to participate in multiple advisory bodies, with limited time and capacity. Creating a new advisory structure without careful consideration can increase engagement fatigue and add burden for communities.

Before creating a new Indigenous advisory structure, organizations should confirm whether a similar structure already exists, and consider options that strengthen, align with, or build on existing governance.

1. Check what already exists

Start by identifying Indigenous advisory structures operating in your region, sector, or partner network. Where a structure already exists, prioritize building relationships with it, supporting its mandate, or aligning your work through that body, rather than creating a parallel structure.

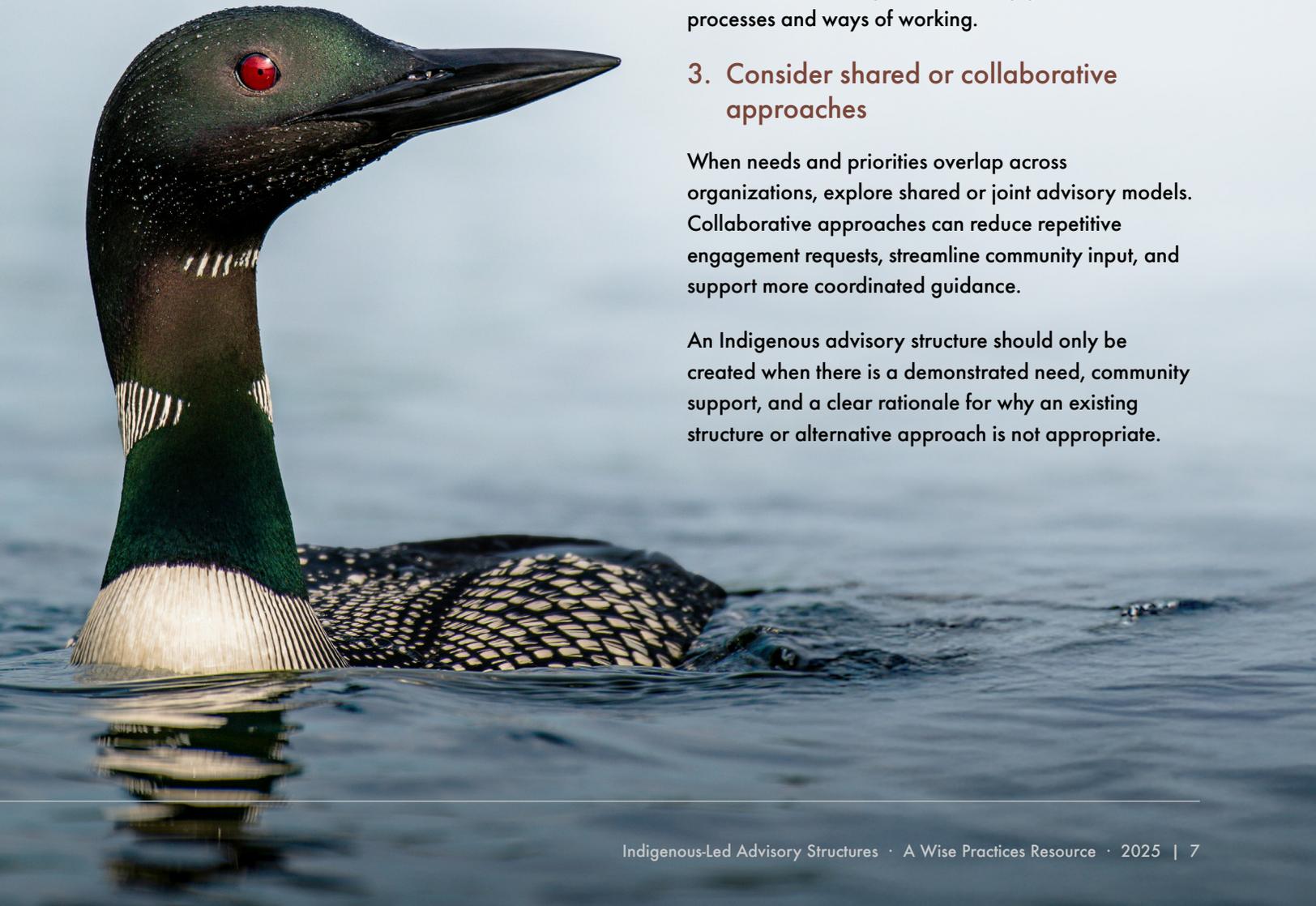
2. Bring your work into existing community spaces

If an advisory structure is not the right fit, consider engaging through existing governance and community forums. This may include requesting time on the agenda of an Indigenous organization's board, council, or established working groups. Engaging through spaces where communities already gather can reduce burden and demonstrate respect for existing governance processes and ways of working.

3. Consider shared or collaborative approaches

When needs and priorities overlap across organizations, explore shared or joint advisory models. Collaborative approaches can reduce repetitive engagement requests, streamline community input, and support more coordinated guidance.

An Indigenous advisory structure should only be created when there is a demonstrated need, community support, and a clear rationale for why an existing structure or alternative approach is not appropriate.



HOW TO CREATE AN INDIGENOUS ADVISORY STRUCTURE

This section is intended for organizations that are ready to move beyond initial engagement and begin creating or strengthening Indigenous advisory structures. It is designed to support those who have already begun building respectful relationships with Indigenous communities and are now seeking practical guidance on internal alignment, resource planning, and culturally grounded implementation.

Organizational Readiness

Before establishing an Indigenous advisory structure, it is important to ensure your organization takes time to reflect and prepare internally. This includes having committed leadership, cultural safety foundations, and the resources needed to engage in a good way. A readiness scan can help identify where your organization is already aligned with Indigenous ways of working, where there are gaps, and how to build upon, rather than replace, past efforts. Use the checklist below to confirm your organization is well positioned to begin this important work.

Readiness Checklist:

Indigenous Leadership

- Is your organization committed to following the leadership of the advisory group rather than directing it?
 - Has your leadership committed to supporting a governance structure that is grounded in self-determination and Indigenous leadership?
 - Are internal roles and expectations clearly defined to support this work?
-

Internal Alignment

- Is your organization clear on the purpose and value of establishing this structure?
 - Has a primary contact been identified to support the advisory structure and has that been shared internally?
-

Resources and Support

- Have sufficient resources been allocated for honoraria, Elder/Knowledge Holder involvement, meetings, and logistics?
- Is there capacity in place to support coordination and sustainability?

Cultural Safety and Competency

- Has your staff and leadership team completed Indigenous cultural safety training?
 - Are there ongoing mechanisms to support culturally safe and trauma-informed engagement?
 - How does the organization respond when someone feels culturally unsafe? What accountability measures are in place to repair trust and address harm?
-

Knowing the Territory

- Has your team taken steps to understand local Indigenous cultures, histories, and current issues beyond your focus (e.g., public health).
- Have you identified relevant Indigenous communities, organizations, or networks in your area?



Establish Purpose, Roles, and Outcomes

Clarify the purpose of the advisory structure:

When creating an Indigenous advisory structure, it is essential to clearly define its purpose and objectives. Consider the need or gap the structure is intended to address and be explicit about what the addition of an Indigenous advisory structure is meant to achieve.

Guiding Questions:

What is the advisory structure for? What need or gap is the advisory structure being created to address? What do we want to learn, improve, or co-create through this circle? What values are driving this work?

A well-defined purpose helps to ground the advisory structure in shared values and outcomes, such as strengthening community input, improving Indigenous health outcomes, advancing equity initiatives, supporting health system transformation, and ensuring Indigenous-led decision-making and leadership.

Clarify the scope of the advisory structure:

In addition to clearly defining the purpose, it is equally important to clarify the scope of the advisory structure. This involves determining the level of input and decision-making authority the circle will hold and identifying

its primary focus areas. Organizations must decide whether the advisory group will serve in a consultative capacity, providing feedback and recommendations, or in a co-decision-making role.

Guiding Questions:

Are there specific projects/services the advisory structure will focus on? How are we following through on feedback and recommendations? Do we have a system in place to respond to or act on their recommendations? Who in the organization is responsible for this? Are we sharing back any results of the advisory group's recommendations with the group?

Equally crucial is ensuring that any recommendations or feedback are meaningfully implemented. Using an Indigenous advisory structure solely as a check-box exercise for engagement, without any follow through on its guidance, is a form of tokenism. There are numerous experiences where members of advisory structures felt as though due diligence was not done by organizations to effectively include and/or report on guidance provided. One specific example is a national organization that experienced resignation of all Indigenous members of their advisory council due to disagreements and disappointment with implementation of recommendations. This demonstrates that advisory structures must be backed by action and accountability to achieve true reconciliation.

Organizations should be explicit about how recommendations will be received, by whom, and how they will be operationalized within governance structures. Establishing systems to track and act on advice, and returning to the advisory structure with updates, demonstrates genuine respect for Indigenous contributions and fosters trust. Clarity around scope ensures that both the organization and advisory members operate with realistic expectations, understood responsibilities, and a shared commitment to meaningful impact.

Co-define outcomes and measures of success:

Goals and outcomes should be co-defined with the Indigenous advisory structure where possible, ensuring they are rooted in the needs and priorities of the community. Rather than centering organizational objectives, the advisory structure should shape the direction of the work, ensuring that what emerges reflects Indigenous perspectives, knowledge, and lived/professional experience. The organization's role is to listen, provide resources, and align its practices to support these Indigenous-defined outcomes. Additionally, success should not be measured solely by institutional metrics, but by the ways in which Indigenous communities recognize progress. By co-defining outcomes in this way, advisory structures move beyond tokenism and become mechanisms for advancing Indigenous self-determination and driving community-led solutions.

Goals and outcomes should not be treated as fixed. There should be regular opportunities to revisit, reflect on, and adapt goals as needed to allow the work to remain responsive to evolving community priorities, changing contexts, and new learnings. Adaptation should be guided by the advisory body itself, ensuring that shifts in direction continue to reflect Indigenous voices and lived realities. This ongoing process reinforces accountability and prevents the advisory structure from becoming stagnant or disconnected from the community it serves.

Guiding Questions:

- *What do we hope will be different by creating this advisory structure?*
- *What are short-term and long-term results or changes we want to see and work towards?*
- *How will we measure impact? How will we know the advisory structure is successful for both the organization and its members?*



Governance and Structure

Strong governance is the foundation of an Indigenous advisory structure. Without it, there is a risk of tokenism, misunderstanding, and eventual breakdown of trust. Clear and transparent governance ensures the work is meaningful, respectful, and sustainable in both process and outcomes. Governance goes beyond standard organizational protocols; it must reflect Indigenous values, traditions, and decision-making practices.

Relationships Between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Governance Structures

For mainstream organizations that include advisory structures within their governance framework, it is important to build respectful, intentional relationships between Indigenous-led bodies and the organization's broader non-Indigenous structures such as Boards of Directors or Executive Committees. These relationships should reflect reconciliation in action, ensuring that Indigenous voices do not exist in parallel or in isolation, but are meaningfully integrated into all levels of decision-making in ways that honour Indigenous self-determination.

Some wise practices for building reciprocal relationships can include:

Formalize Relationships: Develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), Letters of Relationship, or other formal agreements outlining how information and recommendations flow between the advisory structure and the Board of Directors or senior leadership.

Create Representation Pathways: Where appropriate, establish roles that enable the advisory structure's direct connection to decision-making bodies (e.g., an ex-officio seat on the Board, regular Council presentations to the Board, or inclusion in strategic planning meetings).

Respect Distinct Protocols: Honour Indigenous protocols, ceremonies, and communication approaches in all cross-governance interactions. Make all attempts to follow and respect the advisory structure's ways of doing.

Support Cultural Safety in Governance: All members of the organization's governance and leadership structures should complete Indigenous cultural safety training and participate in ongoing relationship-building with the advisory structure.

Ensure Two-Way Accountability: Create transparent systems for reporting back to the advisory structure on how recommendations were acted upon. When decisions differ from advisory structure's advice, explain why, and seek continued dialogue to rebuild understanding.

Building these relationships moves beyond tokenism and ensures that Indigenous voices influence not only specific initiatives but the broader vision, values, and strategic directions of the organization. When done well, these relationships can transform governance culture, embedding Indigenous knowledge and leadership into the heart of organizational decision-making.

Membership and Representation

Membership should reflect the diversity of Indigenous communities and honour the distinct approaches of FNIM. Advisory structures should include a balance of perspectives which may include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, as well as urban Indigenous voices, 2SLGBTQ+ representation, geographic representation, youth, Elders, caregivers, patients, and those with lived or professional experience. Determine what representation will look like in your advisory structure and strive for equitable representation in your membership.



Co-develop a Terms of Reference (ToR)

The terms of reference (ToR) should be co-developed and finalized with advisory members. This document outlines the purpose, goals, roles, and responsibilities of the group, as well as transparent processes for communication, decision-making, and accountability. The ToR should be reviewed regularly and updated as the advisory structure evolves. Refer to [Appendix A](#) for a sample Terms of Reference.

Honorarium

Advisory members must be compensated fairly for their time and contributions. This includes time spent doing any preparation for meetings as well as time spent preparing for and attending meetings. Budgeting for honoraria, meeting coordination, travel, and accommodations (if necessary) ensures that participation is accessible and valued. Compensation should be provided consistently to recognize the contributions of members. See IPHCC's [Wise Practices Guide](#) for recommended Honorarium compensation.

Ongoing Accountability and Evaluation

Regular Evaluation

Evaluation should be an ongoing practice to ensure the advisory structure remains meaningful, effective, and aligned with Indigenous priorities. Success must be measured using Indigenous-defined metrics. Regularly check-in with the advisory structure, both formally and informally, to provide opportunities to reflect on whether the circle continues to be relevant, inclusive, and effective. Feedback should guide adaptations to the circle's processes, focus, or format. This not only strengthens the advisory structure but also demonstrates accountability to the members, showing that their input directly shapes how the circle evolves over time.

Shared accountability

Accountability extends beyond the advisory structure itself. Mainstream organizations that support or create advisory structures must ensure that all parts of their governance structures — including Boards of Directors, senior leadership teams, and other advisory tables — are accountable for how they act upon Indigenous guidance and recommendations. Evaluations should therefore include an assessment of whether Indigenous advisory structure input has influenced strategic decisions, policies, and organizational culture. By aligning accountability across governance levels, organizations demonstrate that Indigenous voices are respected as integral, not peripheral, to leadership and decision-making.

Maintain consistency with relationships

It is essential to understand and appreciate the importance of consistency with the members of your team that are engaging and working with FNIM individuals. These individuals are seen as representatives of your organization by the community. While staff may move on to other roles, FNIM community members are forever attached to their lands and communities. Staff and leadership leaving their roles should maintain continuity by appropriately transitioning their work with the advisory group to their replacement. Ensuring this continuity and consistency maintains a respectful and authentic relationship between the organization and advisory structure.

Acknowledge contributions and impact — celebrate wins together

Recognizing and celebrating the contributions of advisory members is vital to sustaining trust and motivation. Indigenous members contribute as knowledge holders, not just representatives. They bring their time, knowledge, and experience. These contributions should be acknowledged not only through honoraria, but also through public recognition, gratitude, and shared celebration of milestones. When positive change results from the advisory structure's work it is important to celebrate those successes collectively. Highlighting the advisory group's impact reinforces the value of Indigenous voices in decision-making and creates momentum for continued collaboration.



EXAMPLES OF INDIGENOUS ADVISORY STRUCTURES IN ONTARIO

Ontario has several strong examples of Indigenous advisory structures. These include but are not limited to:

Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle (BANAC)

Mandate: Regional health and social planning rooted in Indigenous self-determination, community participation, and lifelong learning.



Indigenous Health Circle

A collaborative planning body meeting to advance improved health outcomes for Indigenous communities in our region

The **Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle (BANAC)** is a regional Indigenous-led planning organization that supports the development of culturally appropriate health and social services. Through its Health Circle, BANAC convenes Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners to address the unique needs of Indigenous communities in the Barrie region.

The Health Circle creates space for community voices to guide planning, advocate for equitable services, and promote Indigenous perspectives within regional systems. It operates under a clear Terms of Reference, with sub-tables that focus on emerging Indigenous priorities such as health, education, and community development.

Key Features:

- **Community-driven structure:** Guided by Terms of Reference with flexible sub-tables that respond to evolving needs.
- **Collaborative model:** Engages both government and non-government organizations in ongoing consultation and joint planning.
- **Culturally grounded leadership:** Ensures that guidance and planning are aligned with Indigenous values and self-determination.
- **Formalized partnerships:** Relationships are maintained through formal Letters of Relationship with partners across sectors.

Key Take-Aways for Health Organizations:

Support flexible, community-driven structures and formalize partnerships through respectful agreements that recognize Indigenous leadership and cultural integrity.

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The Indigenous Health Circle in our region is a strong circle of Indigenous providers and non-Indigenous health providers/allies. We drive change by addressing systemic inequities in the health care system, such as racism. We do that in several ways, including relationship building, formalized in Letters of Relationship, cultural safety training and instituting voluntary self-identification. The intent is that soon, we will have the data that we need to advocate for more improvement.

My advice to my counterparts in other regions is that you don't have to ask for permission to create a health circle to fight for better health care. It's important that this kind of work is Indigenous-led and Indigenous-governed. For example, we set our own agendas, we determine our priorities and then we take action collectively. Always remembering that we have Anishinaabe intelligence and competency that is thousands and thousands of years old and that's what we need to draw on to help keep our communities healthy.

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– Germaine Elliott, Executive Director.

Ontario Indigenous Women's Advisory Council (OIWAC)

Mandate: To guide provincial policy and programs through Indigenous women's leadership, cultural safety, and self-determination.

The Ontario Indigenous Women's Advisory Council (OIWAC) is a provincial Indigenous-led advisory body that centers the voices and priorities of Indigenous women, Two-Spirit, and gender-diverse people. It plays a key role in shaping public systems and policies that impact Indigenous families across Ontario.

OIWAC provides strategic advice on justice, health, education, child welfare, economic development, and violence prevention. The council works in direct partnership with Ontario ministries and Indigenous communities, ensuring that public systems are informed by trauma-informed, gender-based, and culturally relevant perspectives.

Initially, a non-Indigenous Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP) was designated to serve as co-chair. However, Indigenous community members strongly advocated for an entirely Indigenous-led council to ensure that Indigenous voices, perspectives, and lived experiences were not only included but centered in the decision-making process. This resulted in a governance structure that is grounded in self-determination and Indigenous leadership.

Key Features:

- **Indigenous-led and gender-inclusive:** Includes First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women leaders, with explicit inclusion of 2SLGBTQ+ identities.
- **Policy-shaping and systems-focused:** Advises on broad systemic issues across multiple ministries.
- **Collaborative structure:** Allows for subcommittees and working groups based on priority issues.
- **Advocacy in action:** Indigenous community members successfully advocated for full Indigenous leadership, replacing a non-Indigenous co-chair to uphold self-determination.

Key Take-Aways for Health Organizations:

Respect Indigenous governance and leadership. Create space for Indigenous women and 2SLGBTQ+ voices to lead decision-making, not just participate in it.

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It should be Indigenous people that are taking the lead role. It should be our allies in the non-Indigenous community that should be off to the side saying 'tell us how we can help', not assuming any leadership role, but being a true ally. //

– Tania Cameron

Durham Region Aboriginal Advisory Circle (DRAAC)

Mandate: To strengthen Indigenous health and wellbeing in Durham Region through Indigenous-led collaboration and culturally grounded guidance.

The **Durham Region Aboriginal Advisory Circle (DRAAC)** is an independent advisory group that brings together service providers, professionals, communities, and organizations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to plan and take action towards the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples in the Durham Region.

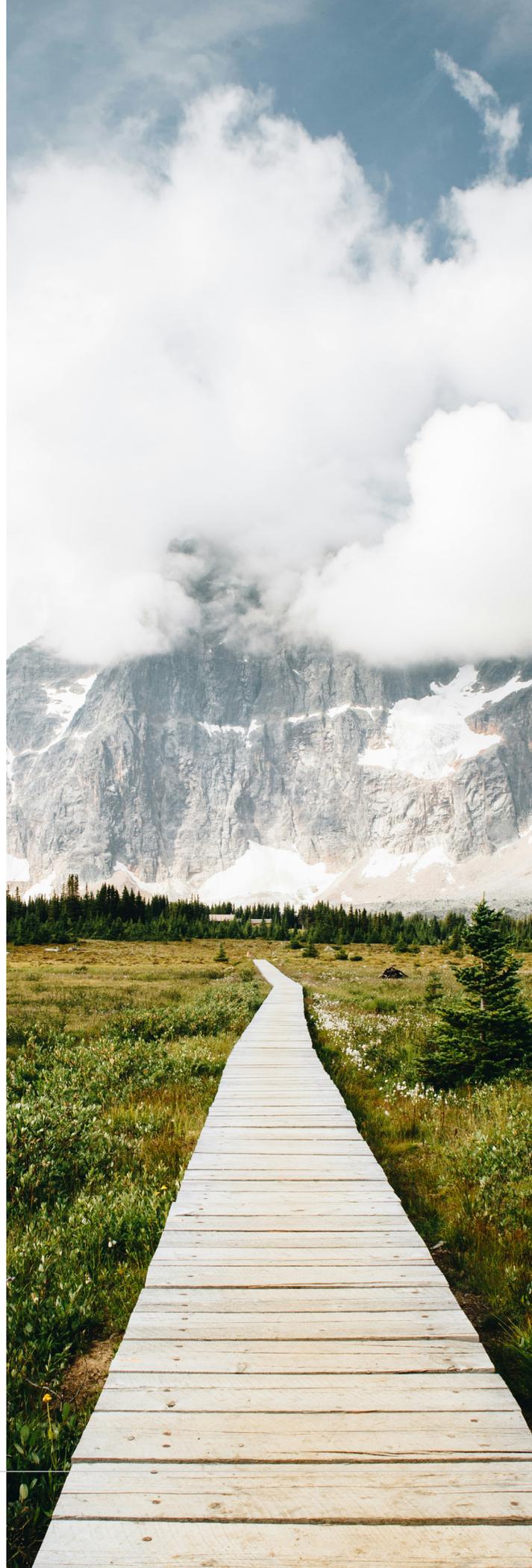
DRAAC provides an opportunity to build relationships, increase cultural safety, and influence programs and policies that impact Indigenous Peoples. It follows Indigenous cultural protocols, makes decisions by consensus, and meets regularly to support community-driven planning and advocacy.

Key Features:

- **Community-centered:** Leadership is appointed by consensus; meetings follow traditional protocols (e.g., smudging, closing circles).
- **Cross-sectoral membership:** Includes over 30 organizations and community advisors.
- **Focus on cultural safety:** Promotes culturally safe services and supports the development of cultural competency frameworks.
- **Collaborative and evolving:** Subcommittees are formed as needed, with members supporting local initiatives and relationships.

Key Take-Away for Health Organizations:

Start with trust and relationship-building. Indigenous advisory structures must be guided by the community, rooted in culture, and supported with long-term commitment, not symbolic inclusion.



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APPENDIX A – SAMPLE TERMS OF REFERENCE

Note for readers: This sample Terms of Reference (ToR) is intended as a model that can be adapted by health organizations in collaboration with local Indigenous communities. Language, structure, and processes should be modified to reflect local protocols, governance, and priorities.

Background

The Background section helps set the context for why the Advisory Circle exists and the values it operates under. In your adaptation, replace the Vision/ Mission with your organizations, or co-develop one with your advisory circle before starting.

[Your Organization Name] is committed to supporting Indigenous-led approaches to health and wellness. Our work honours the physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental wellbeing of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

Vision

We envision a future where:

- The health and wellbeing of all Indigenous Peoples is restored and sustained.
- Health systems provide care that is grounded in respect, dignity, empathy, and cultural safety.

Mission

[Your Organization Name] works to transform Indigenous health outcomes and support the decolonization of health systems by:

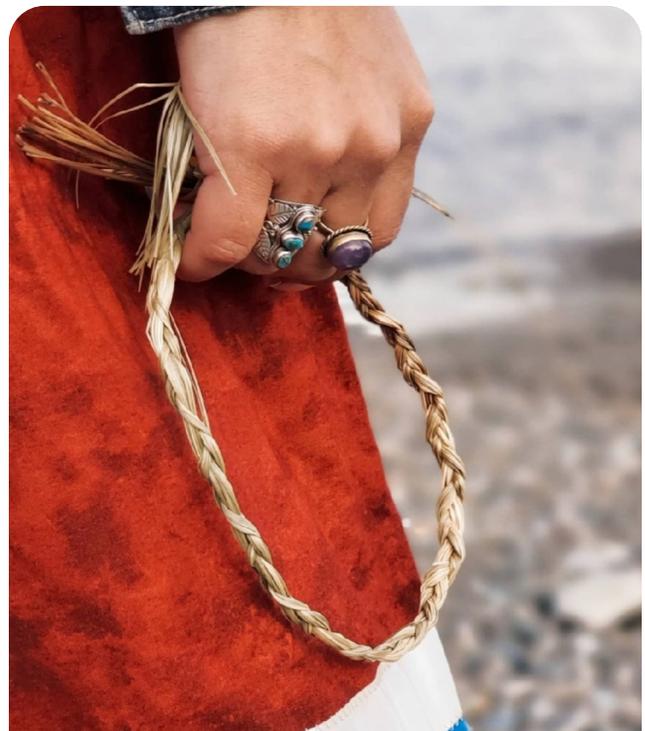
- Partnering with Indigenous communities, service providers, and relevant stakeholders.
- Equipping members and partners with the tools, training, and networks to support culturally safe, high-quality care.

Purpose of the Indigenous Health Advisory Circle (IHAC)

This section answers your “why.” It’s crucial to articulate purpose clearly so members, partners, and leadership understand the Circle’s role. The language here can be directly shaped by community priorities.

The IHAC is a consultative group that meets quarterly (and as needed) to provide advice and guidance to [Your Organization Name]. It supports optimal care delivery for Indigenous Peoples by:

- Ensuring Indigenous voices guide health system design, service delivery, and advocacy.
- Providing a safe space for sharing, listening, and learning together.
- Grounding decisions in the Model of Wholistic Health and Wellbeing, Indigenous cultural values, and ways of knowing.





Guiding Principles

Principles guide decisions even when there's no policy. If your community has existing governance values, use those instead.

The IHAC's work is grounded in the following principles:

1. **Indigenous Health in Indigenous Hands** – Health care must be planned, designed, delivered, and evaluated by Indigenous-governed organizations.
2. **Culture at the Core** – Cultural teachings and practices are central to health and vary between Nations; all are respected.
3. **Recognition of Indigenous Knowledge Systems** – Indigenous teachings, worldviews, and lived experiences are valued sources of evidence and expertise.
4. **Representation of Diversity** – The wide diversity of Indigenous Peoples and communities in Ontario is reflected.
5. **Two-Eyed Seeing** – We learn to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and from the other eye with the strengths of Mainstream knowledges, using both together for the benefit of all.
6. **Accountability to Community** – Decisions and guidance remain responsive to the needs and priorities of Indigenous communities served.

Membership

Membership criteria should reflect local realities. Smaller communities may include more community representatives and fewer clinicians. Urban areas may need more representation from multiple service sectors.

The IHAC will have 8–12 members. Members should:

- Identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis and/or have extensive work experience with Indigenous communities.
- Have connections to Indigenous primary health care or related service providers.
- Demonstrate clinical and advocacy experience in Indigenous health.

Representation

Efforts will be made to ensure balance across regions, perspectives, and disciplines, including:

- Indigenous Cultural Practitioners (Traditional Healers, Knowledge Holders, Elders, Language Holders)
- Nursing (RN, RPN, NP)
- Midwifery
- Mental Health and Social Work (Social Worker, Psychologist, Psychotherapist, Trauma Specialist)
- Physicians (Family Medicine, Specialists)
- Home and Community Care providers
- Allied Health (Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Dietetics, Dental Hygiene, Speech Therapy, etc.)

Roles and Responsibilities

This section sets expectations for participation. Keep it realistic, too many responsibilities may discourage participation. Where possible allow members to co-develop and provide feedback and input into the ToR.

Advisory & Guidance

- Provide input on health inquiries from [Your Organization Name] and partners.
- Offer advice to support culturally safe, high-quality care.

Review & Feedback

- Review documents, training materials, and resources, suggesting improvements for cultural relevance.
- Contribute to the design of culturally appropriate program models and advocacy approaches.

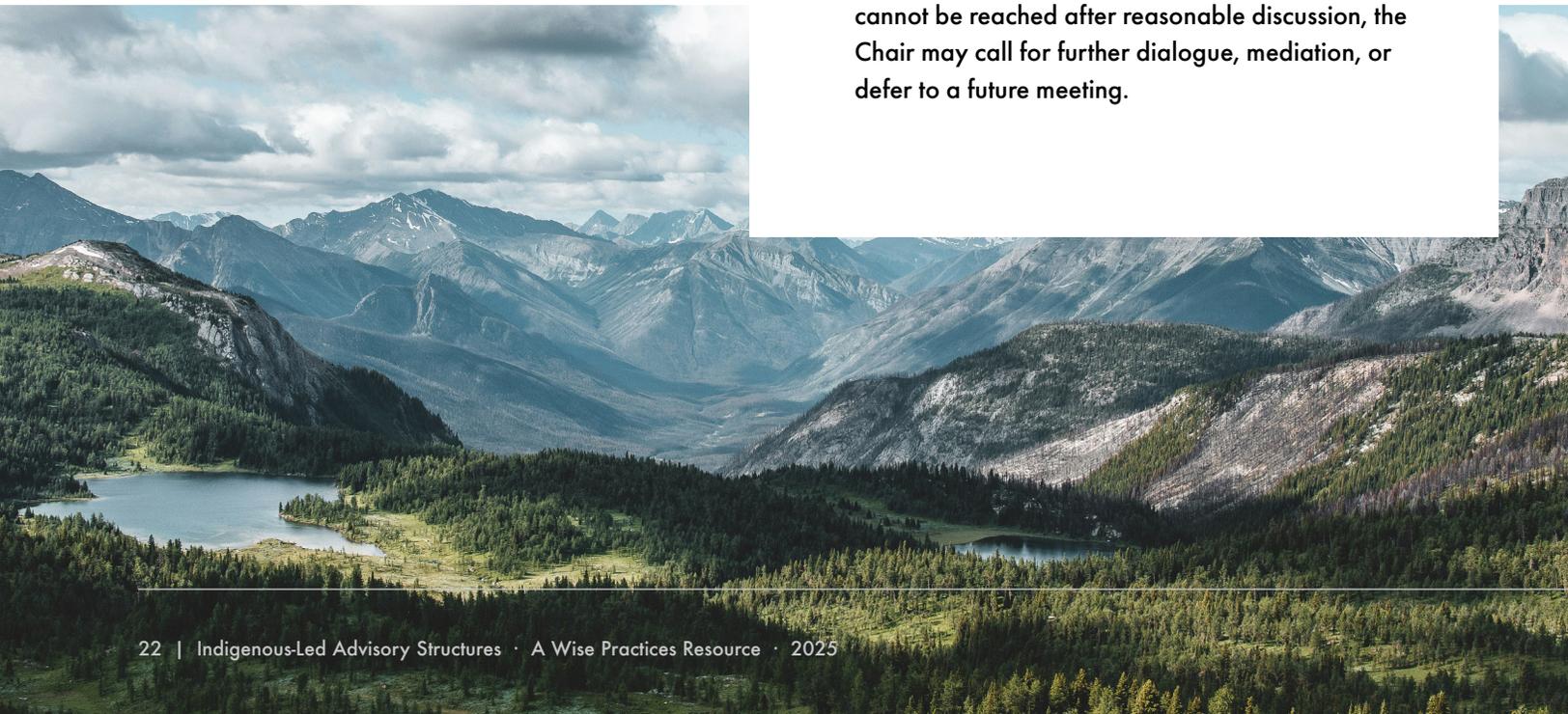
Knowledge Sharing

- Share lessons learned, wise practices, and community experiences to inform care delivery.

Process and Operations

Logistics should fit the community's reality. Rural or remote areas may need more virtual meetings whereas local groups may prefer in-person.

- **Accountability** – The IHAC serves as a advisory group to [Your Organization Name], providing expertise as needed.
- **Meeting Frequency** – Typically quarterly, with ad hoc meetings when required.
- **Format** – Primarily virtual; in-person meetings may be held as needed.
- **Administration** – [Your Organization Name] provides secretariat support, including agenda preparation and minutes.
- **Preparation** – Agendas and materials are shared at least five business days before meetings.
- **Follow-Up** – Minutes are distributed to all members, including those not in attendance.
- **Decision-Making** – The Council will strive to reach decisions through consensus, ensuring all voices are heard and respected. Consensus is achieved when all members can support the decision. If consensus cannot be reached after reasonable discussion, the Chair may call for further dialogue, mediation, or defer to a future meeting.



Member Commitments

This is where you reinforce respect, reliability, and cultural values in participation. Avoid overly formal “rules” and focus on shared commitment.

Members agree to:

- Regularly attend and participate in meetings (or contribute input in writing if absent).
- Review materials and provide feedback within the requested timelines.
- Uphold the Circle’s guiding principles in all discussions.
- Raise potential issues or risks promptly.
- Share wise practices for consideration.

Relationship with the Organization’s Governance Structure

The Indigenous Health Advisory Circle (IHAC) will maintain a direct and reciprocal relationship with the [Organization Name] Board of Directors and Executive Leadership. This connection ensures that Indigenous perspectives and guidance inform the organization’s strategic priorities, policy development, and governance practices.

The IHAC may share formal recommendations or presentations with the Board on a quarterly basis, or as needed. The Board and leadership team will provide updates back to the IHAC on actions taken in response to its guidance, ensuring transparent, two-way communication and accountability.

This relationship reflects a shared commitment to reconciliation, mutual learning, and Indigenous-led decision-making at all levels of governance.

Review of Terms of Reference (ToR)

The ToR will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to community priorities.

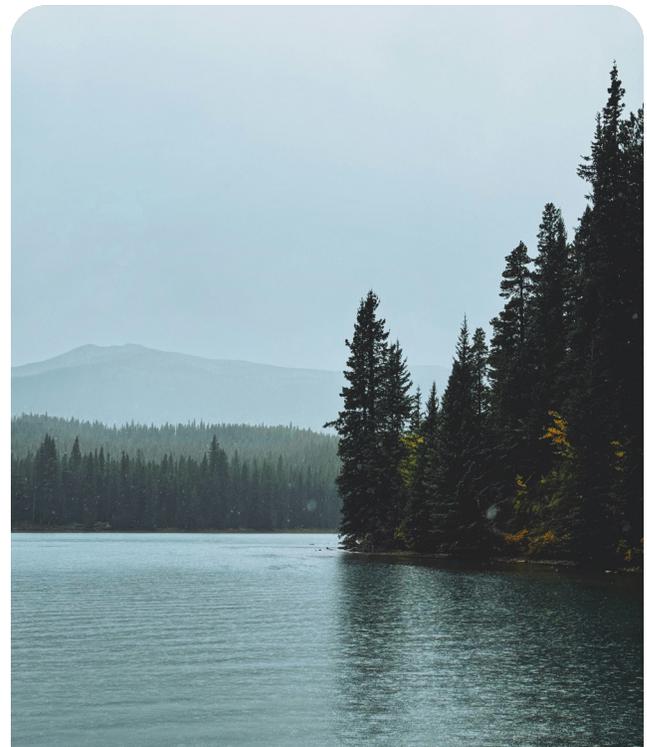
Note: Regular review keeps the ToR alive. Invite the Circle to reflect on what’s working and what’s not.

Remuneration

Members will receive:

- An honorarium for meeting participation and feedback provided outside of meetings.
- Reimbursement for approved travel and expenses, in line with [Your Organization Name] policies.
- Remuneration rates will be reviewed periodically to ensure fairness.

Note: Providing honoraria shows respect for people’s time and knowledge. Always clarify payment process and timelines ahead of time to ensure clarity and avoid misunderstandings.





**INDIGENOUS
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COUNCIL**