



EDI vs. Reconciliation

- We Are a Distinct Nation

Position Statement

Preamble

Indigenous Peoples are **distinct** Nations – **not** categories within Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) or Black and People of Colour (BPOC) frameworks. Positioning First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples within EDI erases our unique legal, historical, and political relationship to the land and to what we now call Canada. It conflates fundamentally different struggles and misrepresents our inherent rights, responsibilities, and pathways to self-determination.

Why Indigenous Peoples Must Stand Apart from EDI Frameworks

- Indigenous Peoples **are not immigrants or settlers** – we are the original Peoples of these lands
- Our inherent rights are affirmed in **Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution**, and grounded in **Treaties, land claims**, and the **United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)**.
- **Reconciliation and decolonization** are inherently tied to the land and are responsibilities that must dismantle colonial systems that continue to impose power imbalances and deny Indigenous sovereignty
- Indigenous Peoples are fighting for **self-determination, sovereignty, and self-governance** – not inclusion within systems designed without us
- Colonial policies implemented through the Indian Act, such as the residential school system, amendments to child protection, establishment of Indian hospitals, and other forms of systemic racism – constitutes a form of **genocide** and must be addressed through justice and systemic change.

Blending Indigenous concerns into EDI frameworks **perpetuates marginalization** and **erases critical issues** unique to Indigenous Peoples of this land.

Canada's Commitment to Indigenous Peoples is Distinct

Canada has specific constitutional, legal, and moral obligations to Indigenous Peoples. These commitments must be understood on their own terms, grounded in:

- Self-Determination and Nationhood
- Decolonization and Reconciliation
- Indigenous Rights and Sovereignty
- Two-Eyed Seeing – the respectful integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge systems without erasing Indigenous worldviews

This distinction is upheld in:

- The Canadian Constitution
- Historic and modern-day Treaties
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- The Calls for Justice from the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls

It must also address the devastating impacts of colonization, including:

- Genocide, land dispossession, forced assimilation, and cultural erasure
- The Indian Act and oppressive legislation
- Intergenerational trauma and systemic inequities built within Canadian institutions

Key Differences: Indigenous Rights vs. EDI

Indigenous Equity Framework	EDI Framework
Grounded in sovereignty and Nationhood	Grounded in minority inclusion within mainstream infrastructures
Focused on self-determination and land rights	Focused on representation and access
Requires decolonization and system transformation	Aims to diversify existing systems to help ensure there is a place for everyone
Rooted in Treaties, UNDRIP, inherent rights	Rooted in equality and anti-discrimination law

What an Indigenous Equity Framework Centers

- Self-Determination and Nationhood – Control over land, health, education, and governance: *Indigenous Health in Indigenous Hands*.
- Decolonization and Reconciliation – Dismantling the impacts of colonial systems like the Indian Act and residential schools
- Indigenous Rights and Sovereignty – Legally grounded in Treaties, land claims, and international human rights law
- Two-Eyed Seeing – Integrating Indigenous and Western systems respectfully, while affirming Indigenous knowledge as distinct and on equal grounds

Educating Others on the Distinction

For Governments and Institutions:

- Indigenous-led training on Treaties, legal rights, and decolonization
- Clear policy distinctions between Indigenous rights frameworks and EDI strategies

For Non-Indigenous Communities:

- Land-based learning with Elders and Knowledge Keepers
- Treaty and Indigenous history education in schools, workplaces, and public institutions

For Indigenous Communities:

- Language revitalization, traditional governance, and intergenerational knowledge transfer
- Building strength and identity rooted in Indigenous models and outside of mainstream institutional models

Why This Distinction Matters

- Nation-Based Rights, Not Minority Rights – Indigenous Peoples hold a legal and political relationship with Canada – not an identity-based claim
- Decolonization Over Inclusion – Our goal is not to be included in colonial systems – but to dismantle them and restore Indigenous systems
- Self-Governance Over Representation – Representation in existing structures does not equal power and the ability to make decisions for us. Self-governance is foundational
- Justice Includes Land and Resources – True equity includes restitution, land return, and economic autonomy – not only workplace diversity

Conclusion: A Distinct and Sovereign Path Forward

Indigenous Peoples **support EDI efforts** for Black and racialized communities – but our path forward must remain distinct. It is rooted in sovereignty, Treaty rights, land, and self-determination. Reconciliation is not a subcategory of diversity – it is a constitutional, legal, and moral obligation.

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Alliance for Healthier Communities, Health Equity Charter

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