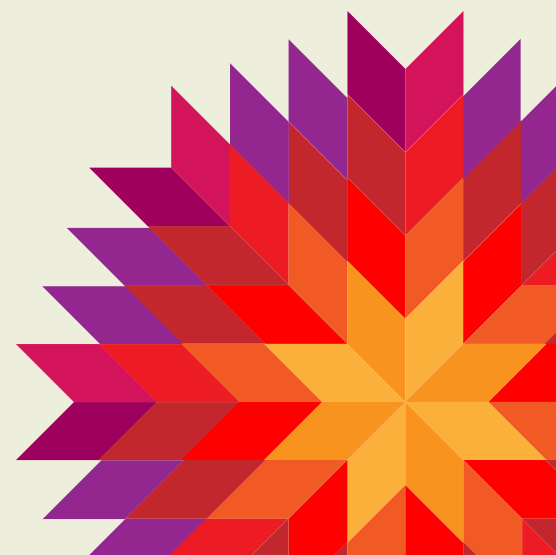


Reconciliation
REGINA

Wahkohtowin

Guide to Building Respectful Relations





Wahkohtowin is a Cree word meaning the interconnected nature of relationships, communities, and natural systems. Its literal meaning is “kinship” and is an obligation and responsibility to maintain good relations.

Introduction

This guide is a reference for individuals who are committed, and looking to enhance their understanding, develop relations, and advance relations with Indigenous people situated in Treaty Four Territory.

It is about making a commitment to building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability with community members who you want to align with and support. Or said another way, this is about making your personal commitment to creating a community where Indigenous Peoples throughout Saskatchewan feel valued, heard, and included.

Wahkotowin does not exist to further your own self interest. Rather, it is about providing space to educate yourself and others on the realities and histories of Indigenous Peoples.

The concept is fundamental to Indigenous communities across Turtle Island and in Saskatchewan includes Nêhiyawak (Cree), Nahkawe (Saulteaux), Dene, Dakota, Nakoda, Lakoda, and Métis Peoples. It is important to understand the role this guide can play within a collective experience you have with others and, and it requires you to demonstrate your understanding through your actions, your relationship, and the recognition by the community.

Ask yourself, why you want to develop relations with Indigenous Peoples?

Self- Assessment....be critical of any motivations:

- Does my interest come from the fact that the issue is currently buzzing, a hot topic?

- Does my interest come from the fact that the issue will meet quotas or increase chances of funding?

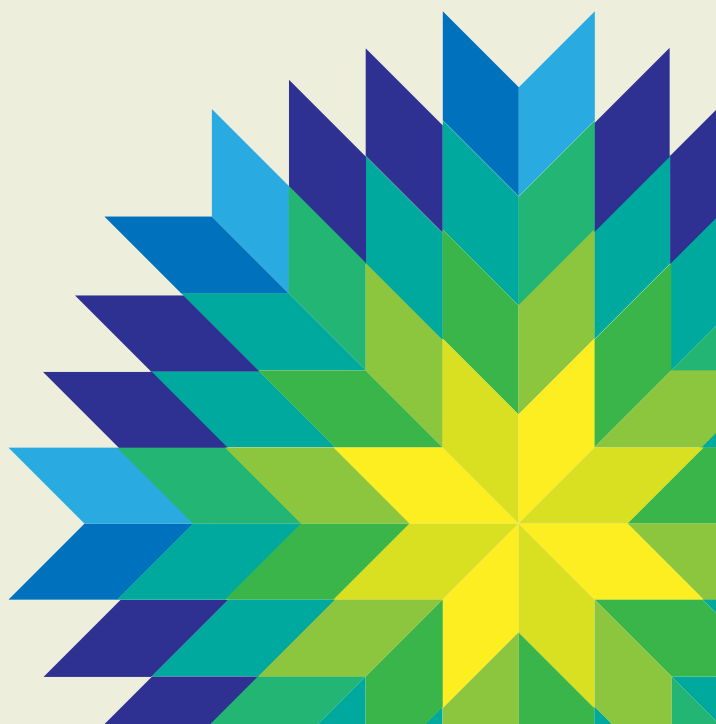
- Does my involvement "hijack" the message and insert my own opinions or values instead of respecting Indigenous ways of being?

- Do I want to work on the values of Wahkotowin to feed my ego?

If you answered yes to any of the questions above and many of us do and will; then this is an invitation to challenge yourself to learn more about Indigenous history and culture, and to use this guide to begin your journey of understanding and commitment.

If you answered no to all the questions, then you recognize and understand that developing relations with Indigenous people and communities is a commitment that goes beyond checking a list and/or being in competition. You are encouraged to challenge your perspective and start from the place that everyone has a right to dignity, respect and equal and equitable access to resources.

Developing relations with the first peoples of Turtle Island is about a way of being, self-awareness of motivations, and having the courage to debrief with community members on a continual basis (It is a way of life).



6 Guidelines

INDIGENOUS
RELATIONS

01
TRUTH

06
RECONCILIATION

ACKNOWLEDGE
02

RECIPROCITY
05

03
RESTORING

04
RELATIONAL

1 Learn the “Truth”

Be Aware: of individuals and communities you are working with; seek to understand the underlying issues that have created the current situation

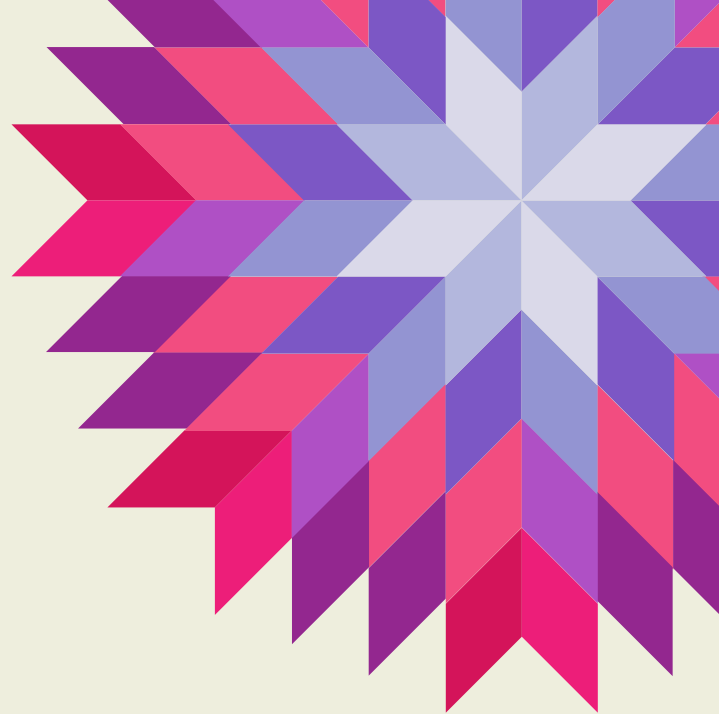
Your journey begins with recognizing and being aware of the truth. Be aware of Indigenous communities you are working with and work to understand the underlying issues that have created the current situation.

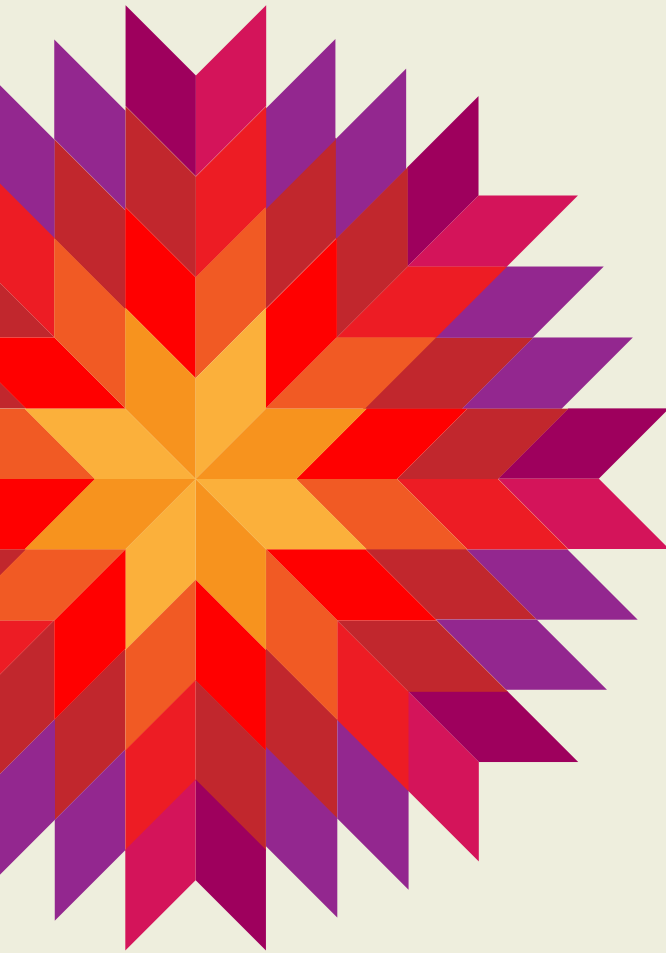
Did you know resources are online and easily accessible to begin your learning journey. ...Here are a few resources to start with to begin your learning:

- National Commission of Truth and Reconciliation - <https://nctr.ca/>
- Office of the Treaty Commissioner - <http://www.otc.ca/>
- United Nations Declaration Rights of Indigenous Peoples - <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/>

Educating yourself is an ongoing process. Change isn't easy, and you will never truly be an expert on Indigenous challenges and realities. Indigenous peoples are the experts of their own realities and histories. As you educate yourself, ask yourself:

- How can I use this new information in my everyday life?
- What steps can I personally take to amplify Indigenous voices that are too often silenced?
- How can I use my position and privilege to listen, shift power dynamics and take steps toward reconciliation?





2 Acknowledge

Inform: provide balanced and objective information that the public should know and act on; enhances advocacy efforts

Once you have a good understanding of the truth then tell others. Provide balanced and objective information including steps they can take to support social inclusion. This is being a leader. Your efforts are about supporting a positive narrative that includes Indigenous communities.

Did you know.....a land acknowledgement is a single act of reconciliation; the purpose of genuinely and intentionally providing a land acknowledgement is to recognize the first peoples of the land or what is now known as Canada. A land acknowledgement has been inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada Final Report. Please access the following to learn more: <https://nctr.ca/records/reports/>

“This toolkit provides a short and informative “how to” guide for those of us who want to get involved with Indigenous communities but have been unsure how. It provides a path for reflection, education, and action for us to go forward together in “a good way.” All of us in the non-Indigenous community will learn from this valuable contribution.”

James Daschuk – Author, Clearing the Plains

3 Restoring Relations

Consult: obtain and consider feedback or input into ideas and decisions

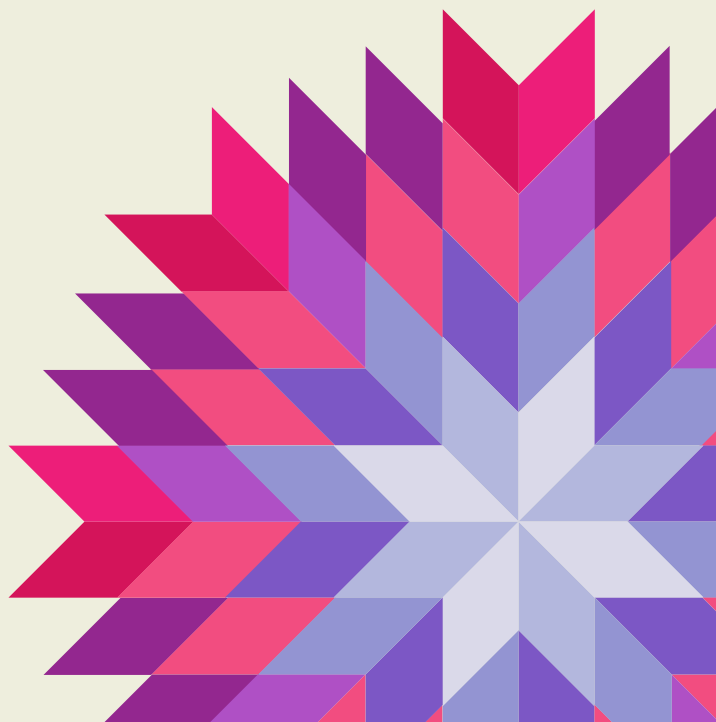
Take the time and make the effort to consult with Indigenous communities. Listen, obtain, and consider feedback or input into ideas and decisions.

Act accordingly – to do this, it is crucial to establish a direct line of communication with Indigenous communities. This could be through a friend or direct involvement or volunteer to experience and build relationships with Indigenous communities.

Did you know.... intellectual property should be considered when restoring relations. Indigenous communities have ownership, control, access, and possession of their information, their knowledge, their experiences, and their stories. Please reference the following link for more information: <https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/>

FACT: In Saskatchewan...

- Elders from Indigenous Communities are highly respected and honored
- There are seven linguistic groups among Indigenous Peoples in our territories
- Treaties 2, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 10 exist
- There are over 74 First Nations, and 12 Métis Regions
- Indigenous communities are youngest and fastest growing population in Saskatchewan. Please reference the following for more information:
<https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/220921/dq220921a-eng.htm>



4 Make it Relational

Involve: work with Indigenous communities to understand the challenges and issues; include Indigenous communities in identifying options to move forward collectively

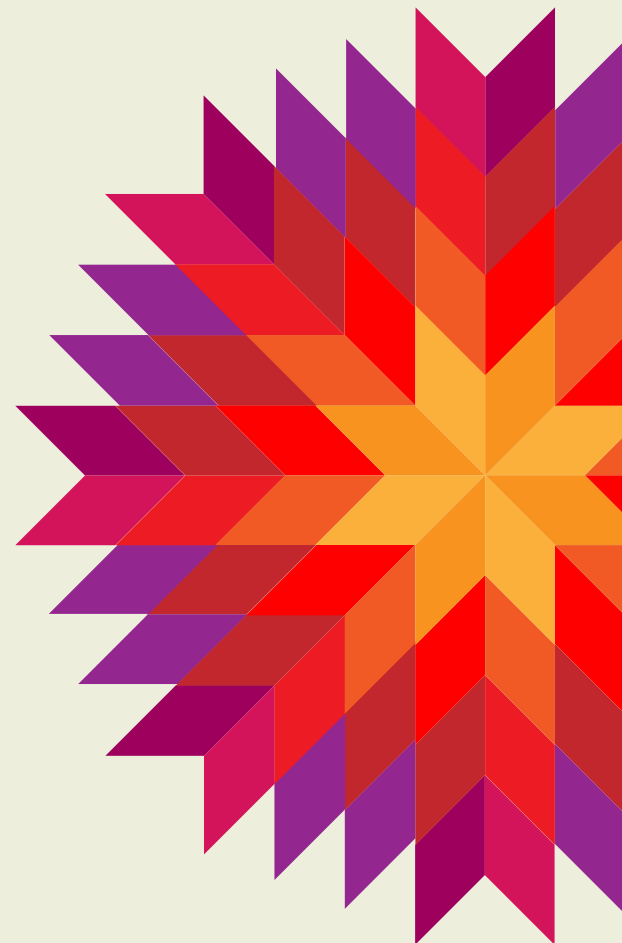
Become involved at the local level to understand the value of Indigenous ways of knowing. Involve the Indigenous community in all aspects of the work. Commit to collectively working with Indigenous communities to understand the challenges and issues. Include Indigenous communities in identifying options and solutions that will help move opportunities forward collectively.

Things be aware of as you work on relations:

- **Listen** to the experts – Indigenous Peoples
- **Ask** Indigenous communities what you can do
- **Research** to learn more about the history
- **Follow through** on your commitment

Did you know..... language is a powerful tool that can draw us closer together or drive us further apart. Words matter and psychologically can create a sense of safety, inclusion, respect and welcome.

Our words frame how we see things, explain things, and understand things... For example: using “person” first language recognizes individuals as a person without highlighting differences such as heritage, gender, age, sexual orientation, race or condition.



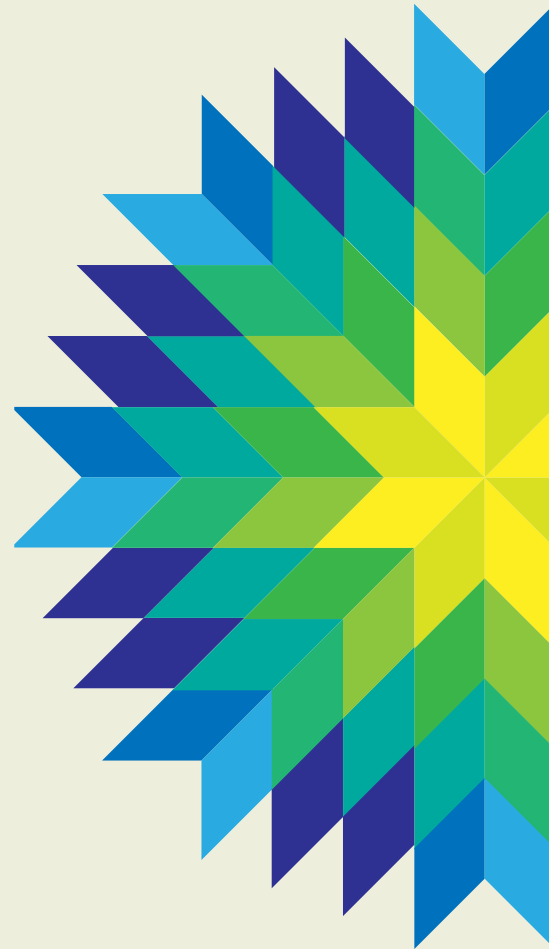
5 Practice Reciprocity

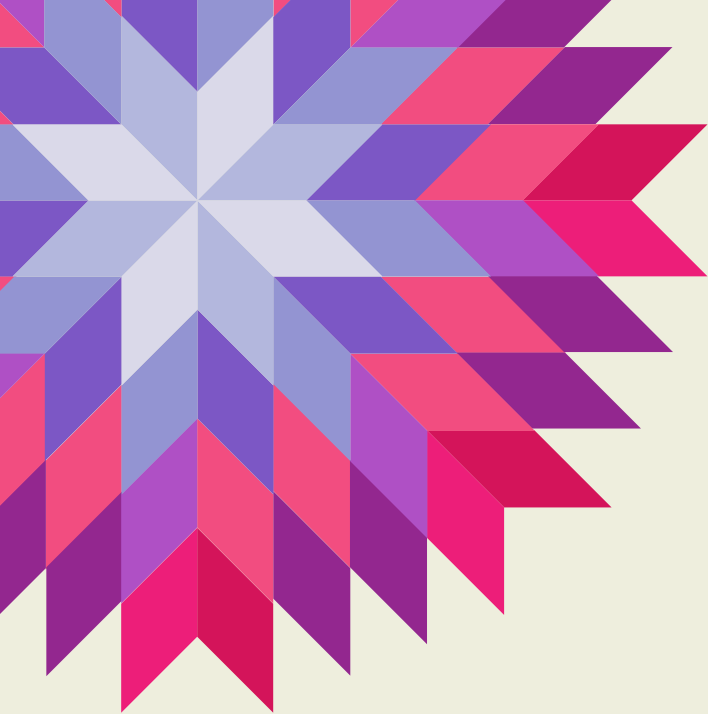
Collaborate: partner with Indigenous communities seeking advice and innovations that become embedded as much as possible in decisions

This is about being genuine when partnering with Indigenous communities. Practicing reciprocity means giving back in a meaningful way, remunerating Indigenous people for their knowledge and expertise.

- **Get to know** who you are working with and ask questions for clarity
- **Build relations** with Indigenous communities based on mutual consent and trust
- **Continue to support and act** in meaningful ways.

Did you know... Properly remunerating and crediting Indigenous Peoples for their time and knowledge is a strength-based approach that leads to reciprocity.





The spirit and intent of the Treaty relationship is more valid than the written text and will last

“as long as the sun shines, the rivers flow and the grass grows.” Alexander Morris

6 Move Towards Reconciliation

Empower: Final decisions made by community for community; ownership in implementing the decisions

Educating yourself and embracing Wahkohtowin is an ongoing process. Ensure you challenge yourself to empower final decisions made by community to be implemented using a collective, adaptable and innovative approach that will meet the need of Indigenous Peoples.

There are many books available to assist with understanding. Please reference the reading list available at <https://reconciliationregina.com/>

Did you know.... We are all treaty people? Please visit the Saskatchewan Office of the Treaty Commissioner to learn more at: <http://www.otc.ca/>

Looking Ahead

Wahkotowin is having the courage to be vulnerable and to apply ongoing learnings in a meaningful way. Change will not be easy, and individuals practicing or experiencing new relations will never truly be an expert on Indigenous ways of knowing. However, working towards kinship enables you to work effectively with Indigenous communities for true and sustainable impact.

Did you know.... developing relations requires individuals to highlight the facts and hold others accountable when oppressive behaviors are being displayed. When it comes down to it, Wahkotowin is about being vulnerable by risking your own voice to elevate others.

Final Thoughts

- **Acknowledge that you are a guest on this land**
- **Recognize that multiple nations exist within Turtle Island**
- **Respect Indigenous cultural and protocols**

Acknowledgments:

A Special thank you to the Elder(s) and Knowledge Keepers who provided support and guidance into the development of this guide.

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Thank you to the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network for allowing us to use content from the Indigenous Ally Toolkit.

This guide has been implemented using Indigenous practice through respect of Indigenous oral governance and has been approved by Indigenous Elders. Therefore, is protected in accordance with Indigenous understandings of natural law.

Supported by United Way Regina and United Way Saskatoon

