

# Indigenous Cultural Safety in Research **FRAMEWORK**



A **Supportive** Environment  
for Indigenous-Led Health Research

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**Authorship Statement:** Tara Erb (PhD Candidate SFU & Network Coordinator BC NEIHR) led the authorship of this document in collaboration with Charlotte Loppie (Professor, UVic) and the BC NEIHR Indigenous Cultural Safety in Research Committee. The BC NEIHR operates under the guidance and values of our Indigenous-led Governing Council. **Copyright Statement (2022):** This document is copyrighted by the BC NEIHR. All of its content may be used without permission provided the authors are fully acknowledged.

## Introduction

### Indigenous cultural safety and anti-racism training:

The concept of cultural safety, as we understand it, emerged within the doctoral dissertation of Irihapeti Ramsden, who was a Māori/Aotearoa New Zealand nurse, when she developed Kawa Whakaruruhau to explicitly address inequitable power relations, racism, and other forms of discrimination, as well as the ongoing impacts of historical injustices (Browne, Varcoe, Ford-Gilboe & Wathen, 2015; Ramsden, 2002). Since then, the concept of cultural safety has evolved and become a key component of Canada's commitment to reconciliation, as supported by the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the 2007 United Nations' Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) (FNHA, 2019).



A Key Component of  
**CANADA'S COMMITMENT**



# Create Processes That Ensures **CULTURALLY SAFE PLANS**

Today, Indigenous cultural safety (ICS) training is a means to interrogate, disrupt and address how everyday acts of power and racism continue to cause violence and harm to Indigenous peoples. For reconciliation to happen, it is crucial that non-Indigenous people face our shared history and consider the role it has played in shaping inequities among Indigenous peoples. This component of ICS training includes information, based on evidence, about historical violence and harm to Indigenous peoples. Some of this work includes filling in gaps in individual learning and in the broader state of knowledge. It also includes addressing myths and stereotypes in colonial narratives, as well as racist ideology that forms individual and collective consciousness reflected in mainstream institutions.

With the overarching goal of addressing anti-Indigenous racism, ICS training aims to sensitize participants to the impacts of ongoing colonialism and racism. In this regard, ICS training can be challenging for participants. It is difficult for people to come to terms with their own unearned power and privilege, their continued benefit from colonialism, as well as the violence and harm it perpetuates against Indigenous peoples. There is an immense need for ICS initiatives (Auger et al., 2019), which have been a response to Canada's raising national consciousness to address health barriers and inequities. There is now a general increased willingness among professionals to participate in ICS training initiatives, which has created an impetus for more ICS training (Wylie, McConkey, & Corrado, 2021).

## ICS and anti-racism in the context of research

BC health authorities have implemented several cultural safety training opportunities, including in-person training sessions, workshops and webinars. In particular, the Provincial Health Services Authority (PHSA) created and hosts the well-respected San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training program, which offers facilitated online cultural safety training to health service providers, staff and management in all BC health authorities. Cultural safety is no less critical to the practice of research. Several of the same inequities in decision-making power and risk to individuals, families, communities and Nations exist in both spheres. Therefore, it is imperative that we create guidelines and processes that ensure meaningful and culturally safe plans and practices in Indigenous health research relationships and projects.

Clearly, there is a need for post-secondary institutions, Research Ethics Boards (REBs), funders and other research organizations to adopt Indigenous cultural safety (ISC) and anti-racism as a pillar of research ethics, reflecting section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Chapter 9 of Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS), which prohibits discrimination based on race and affords everyone the right to equal protections and benefit of the law.

As outlined by CIHR (2020), Indigenous health research is based on the right to respectful engagement and equitable opportunities. To this end, CIHR sets out 'guidelines' to assist researchers and institutions in carrying out ethical and culturally safe research involving Indigenous peoples. However, such guidelines are only "voluntarily assumed by the researcher in return for the funding" (CIHR, 2020, np.). Members of BC NEIHR assert that relying on 'voluntarism' to guidelines is not enough to ensure ethical and culturally safe research. In response, the BC NEIHR has developed an Indigenous Cultural Safety in Research (ICSR) Framework.

The BC NEIHR ICSR Framework intends to address anti-Indigenous racism in research on two levels. First, it addresses the harm, discrimination and barriers Indigenous researchers continue to experience when pursuing research funding and ethics review processes, as well as engaging with structural environments such as institutional standards for research career pathways (e.g., 'publish or perish'). For example, in the ethics review process, non-Indigenous reviewers often lack an understanding of Indigenous research relationships and protocols as well as their own biases. Moreover, Indigenous researchers typically hold broader accountabilities (e.g., future generations, the land, family and community, etc.) with which western institutions are unfamiliar (CIHR, 2020).

Second, the framework will address potential harm perpetuated by non-Indigenous researchers who are not adequately trained in ICSR and propose to conduct research with Indigenous communities, collectives or organizations (ICCOs). For example, institutions must mandate ICSR sanctioned training and oversight of research led by non-Indigenous researchers.



# Anti Racism As a Pillar of **RESEARCH ETHICS**



Better Prepared in  
**RESPECTFUL RESEARCH**

## The ICSR Landscape & BC NEIHR Proposal

In 2019, the BC NEIHR development team held a series of coordinated events that brought together approximately 100 community members, Elders/Knowledge Holders, students, researchers and institutional partners for day-long discussions about Indigenous research in BC. Participants strongly recommended that University Research Ethics Boards (REBs) become more committed, responsive and trained to assess: (a) the nature and strength of Indigenous community-academic research partnerships, (b) strategies to mitigate power imbalances, (c) measures to ensure community ownership and control, and (d) researchers' cultural safety, competency and accountability. They also recommended that academic researchers receive training to better prepare them to engage in ethical research with Indigenous communities, which is supported in the literature (Moore, 2015; Morton Ninomiya & Pollock, 2017).

Working in close partnership and with support from academic (e.g., University of Victoria, University of British Columbia, Simon Fraser University, and University of Northern British Columbia) and other (i.e., health authorities) REBs, the BC NEIHR has engaged a team of Indigenous and allied scholars, ICCOs, students, REB members and research service staff that will design, implement and evaluate Indigenous research ethics training modules and resources for researchers and REBs and peer review committees. We will also negotiate commitments from these partners to make this training mandatory for all researchers who propose to engage in Indigenous health research as well as new and existing REB and peer review committee members.

There is a clear call for increasing the capacity of non-Indigenous researchers and institutions to better prepare to engage in respectful research partnerships with Indigenous communities; this includes recommendations for cultural safety training for students, researchers and research staff (Moore, 2015). Working closely with interested ICCOs, the BC NEIHR will develop, pilot and offer a cultural safety training and certification process for BC NEIHR allied researchers and students. Researchers and students who have received this certification will be added to a BC NEIHR roster of academic investigators that will be accessible to ICCOs who are seeking to partner on BC NEIHR and externally supported projects. We will also work with our institutional partners to encourage this training be available (and perhaps mandatory) for all research trainees and investigators.

## Research Environments: A Tree Metaphor

In “Defining Indigenous Health Research”, CIHR states that respectful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can only be established when the research environment is socially, spiritually, emotionally and physically safe (2020). We learn from Mi’kmaq Elder Albert Marshall that, while trees drop seeds on the ground each year, some will remain dormant for three or four cycles. Elder Marshall explains that “seeds germinate when the environment is right” (Bartlett, Marshall & Marshall, 2012). In heeding Elder Marshall’s teaching, the BC NEIHR introduces a Research Environments Framework, which employs a land/water-based metaphor to understand interrelated research environments.

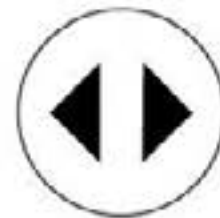
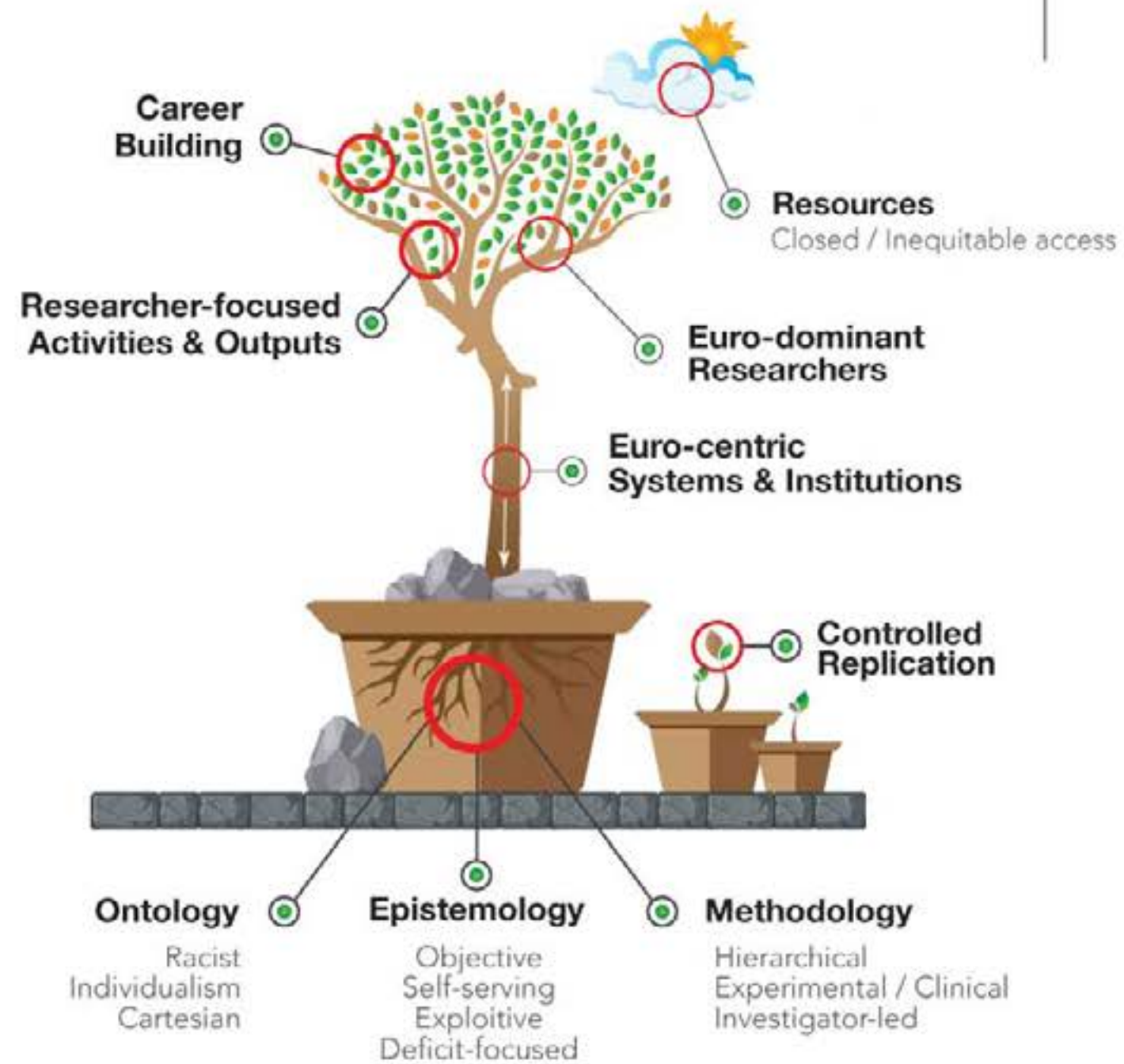
Trees represent a useful and culturally appropriate model for understanding how structural, systemic and immediate environments influence research. It begins with the soil, which nourishes the growth and production of the tree. Within this environment, the roots proliferate to provide the tree with structure, from which systems develop to direct the flow of resources. Subsequent stem environments are shaped to further influence the production of leaves, fruit, flowers, etc. Seedlings are nurtured by the tree, so they might germinate and grow.

As a metaphor for research, the soil represents philosophies that nurture the roots of research ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies. These foundations generate core institutions and systems that determine how the research enterprise is structured. Within these core environments, systems and institutions of research determine what is seen and what is ignored, what is valued and what is rejected, what is protected and what is neglected. The stem environments represent research disciplines, faculties and departments, in which researchers are shaped, guided and resourced - to impact the fruit of their labour as well as subsequent generations of researchers.

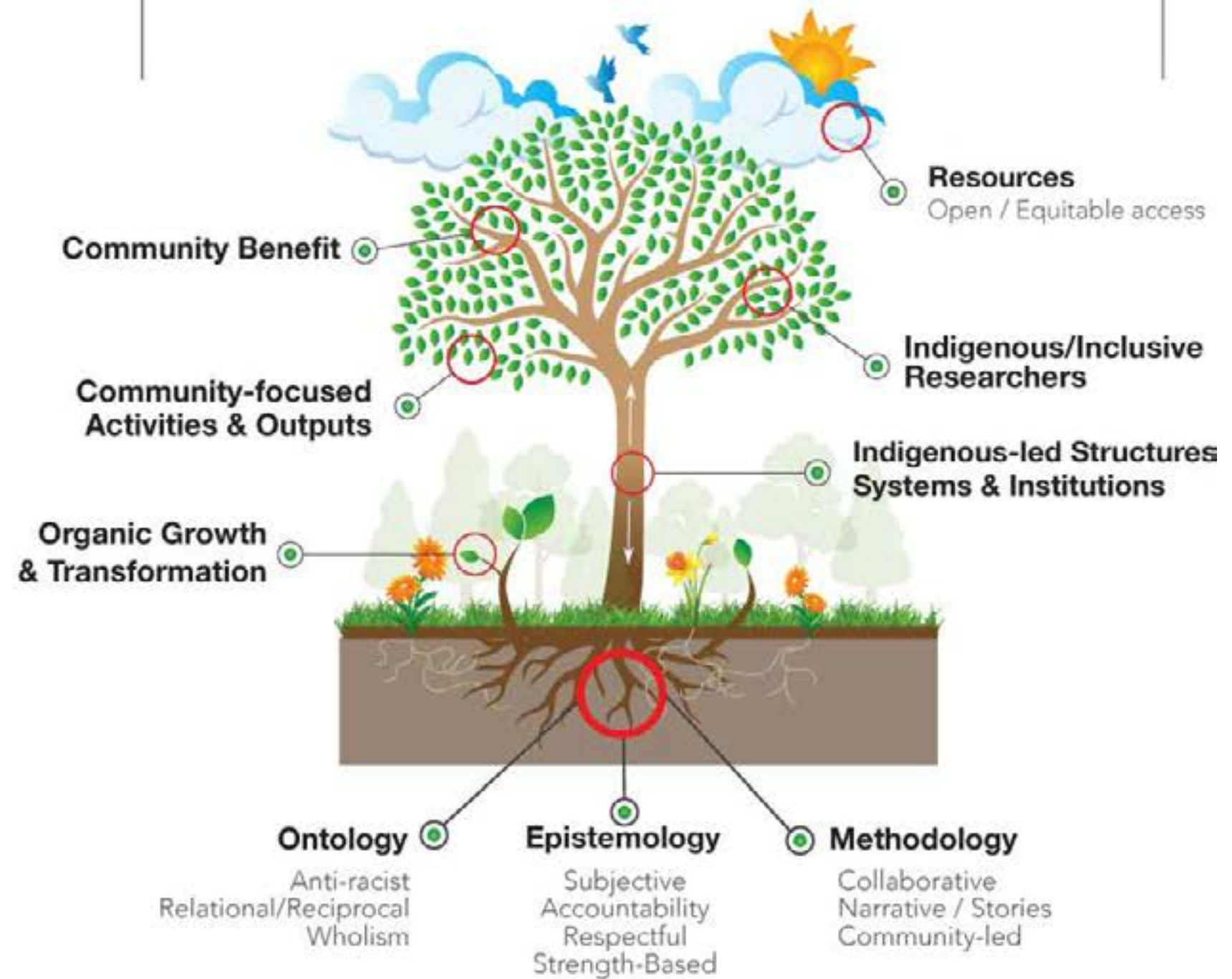


Seeds Germinate When The  
**ENVIRONMENT IS RIGHT**

## The Colonial Research Environment



## A Decolonized Research Environment





# The Colonial Tree is **ISOLATED & MANICURED**

## The Colonial Research Environment

Within the colonial research environment, the metaphorical tree (i.e., research) is isolated and carefully manicured, while its products are rigidly controlled. Growth is not organic and the individualistic environment limits what the soil will nourish and how roots can grow; thus, they do not support diversity and interconnectedness. Within this model, resources are restricted to the immediate environment (i.e., pots), which is intended to support and produce only what has been planted. The knowledge produced by colonial research environments is therefore extractive - rather than generative or useful outside its limited context. Finally, these environments can be uprooted or replaced when more progressive or lucrative options are desired.



## Colonial Soil

Within colonial soil, the research enterprise is embedded in individualistic philosophies and hierarchies. Thus, the perennial roots of western research, represented in this model as ontology, epistemology and methodology, become saturated with these ideologies.

## Colonial Roots

**Ontology** is a philosophical term that refers to how we understand reality. It is the foundation for understanding what constitutes knowledge, how to search for knowledge and what to do with that knowledge. There is a great deal of variation in cultural understandings of reality, particularly between what are referred to as Western and Indigenous cultures.

Traditional colonial ontology includes belief in a single reality that is true for everyone. It is thought that, by reducing complex systems into their most infinitesimal elements, we can discover the universal truths of this reality.

**Epistemology** refers to our understanding of what represents knowledge and how we can come to know. Research disciplines and researchers assume an epistemological position based on their ontology. Among those who subscribe to a colonial ontology, their epistemological position is likely one that seeks objective (assumed to be value-free) truth that is generalizable (widely applicable).

**Methodology** refers to the general approach taken to gathering information so that it can be analyzed and used. These approaches are typically based on one's epistemological position. Methodologies aligned with objective epistemologies are generally experimental and/or quantitative designs with large samples that will produce generalizable results that are considered accurate (i.e., highly predictable). They typically rely on deductive analysis, which draws on established theories that pre-determine the meaning of data. These research designs are quite common in many research disciplines including health, natural and applied sciences, business and many of the social sciences.



## Colonial Structures and Systems (Core)

Structures and systems within a colonial research environment, including funding agencies, peer review committees, research ethics boards and universities, represent the roots of western ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies, embedded in the colonial soil of individualism and hierarchy.

## Colonial Stem Environments

The processes and products of colonial stem environments like university faculties and departments, as well as other knowledge generating institutions, tend to be focused on academic research interests and building one's career. Within these environments, sparse numbers of Indigenous researchers search for culturally relevant training and mentorship, while struggling to have their research funded, published and counted toward appointment, tenure and promotion.

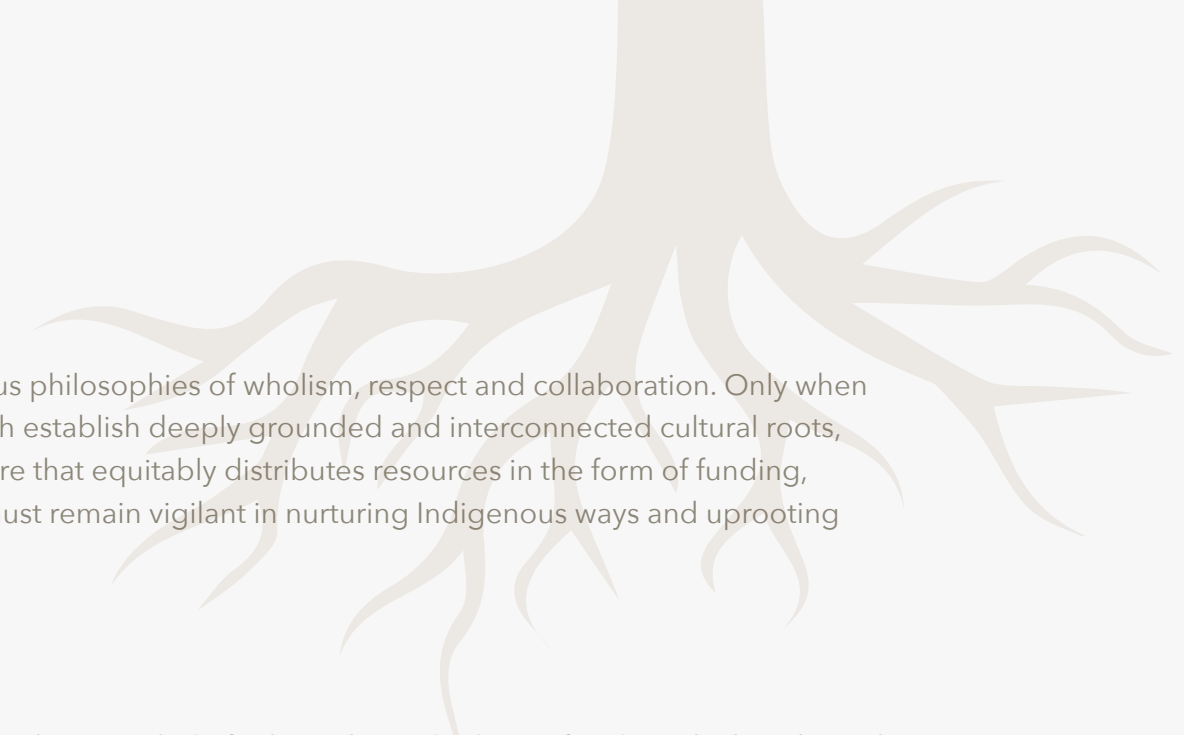
Indigenous research cannot achieve healthy growth and production within this restrictive environment that represent barren soil for Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies and methodological roots. Likewise, within colonial core systems and structures, community-led Indigenous research, based on philosophies of sharing rather than career building, is often devalued, misunderstood or uprooted, all of which create barriers and cause harm to Indigenous researchers, trainees, communities, collectives, Nations and research relationships.

## The Decolonized Research Environment

Within a decolonized research environment, metaphorical trees are established and grow naturally, without external restrictions or cultivation. Growth is organic and unrestricted in this communal environment, which nourishes diverse and interconnected roots. The community knowledge produced by decolonized research environments is transformative and supports the roots of community action. These environments also tend to be more sustainable as communities outside academia are meaningfully engaged in seeding, growth and production processes.



Decolonized Research is  
**TRANSFORMATIVE**



## Decolonized Soil

Decolonized research soil is rich in traditional Indigenous philosophies of wholism, respect and collaboration. Only when the environment is decolonized can Indigenous research establish deeply grounded and interconnected cultural roots, to be collectively supported and uplifted by a strong core that equitably distributes resources in the form of funding, training, mentorship, and relationships. Therefore, we must remain vigilant in nurturing Indigenous ways and uprooting colonial threats.

## Decolonized Roots

**Ontology:** Philosophies of wholism nourish traditional Indigenous beliefs about the multiplicity of reality, which is shaped by innumerable, interconnected physical and ethereal domains. Wholism also guides us to consider the reciprocal interdependence of all things.

**Epistemology:** The epistemological position of those who subscribe to Indigenous ontologies is likely one that acknowledges the subjectivity and variability of experience.

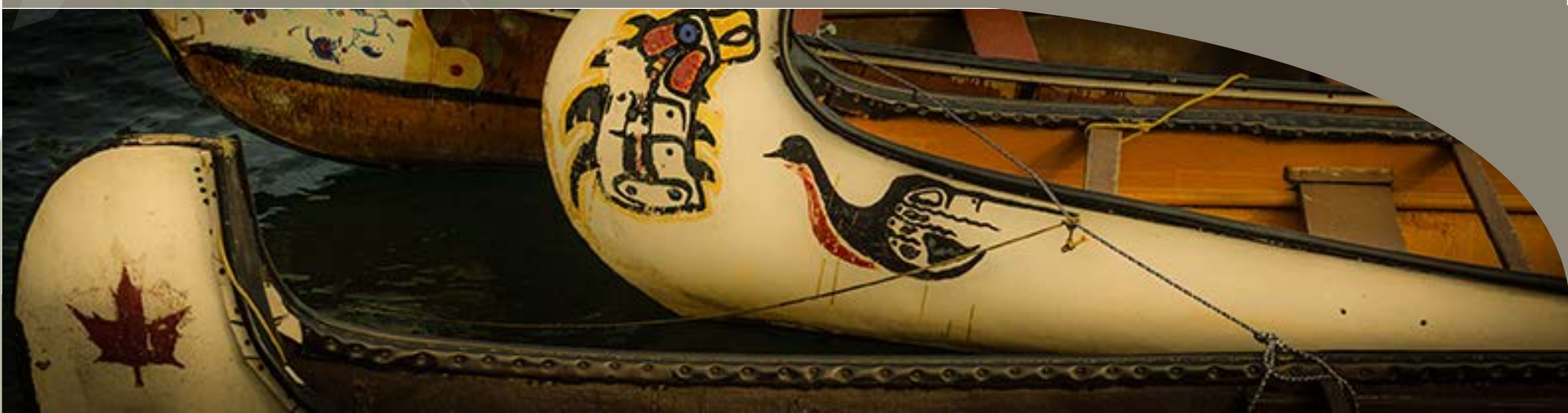
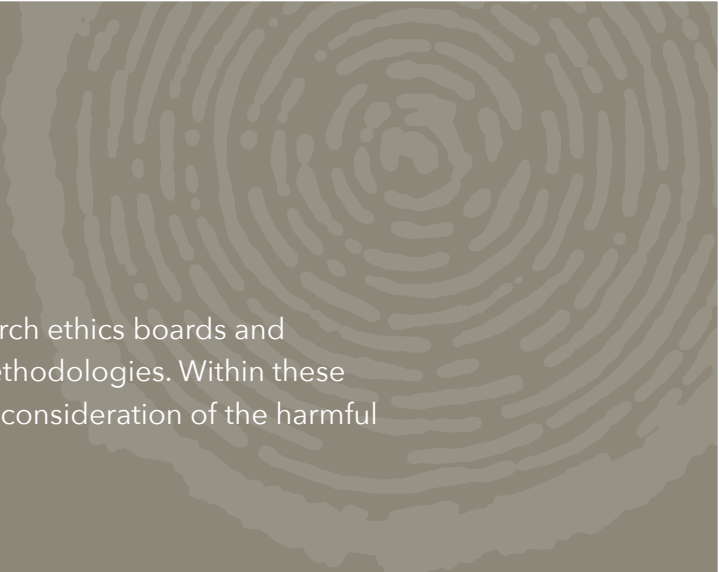
**Methodology:** Indigenous methodologies aligned with wholism, interconnection and reciprocity are relational in nature and seek to understand the subjectivity of human experience. Qualitative methods are often, but not always, employed with smaller, more intentional samples, to generate deeper understanding rather than generalizability. Indigenous methodologies are often narrative or story-based, as storytelling is crucial for the transmission of knowledge and teachings in oral cultures. Inductive analysis ensures that knowledge sharers' own words, rather than generalized theories, determine the meaning of their experiences.

## Decolonized Structures and Systems (Core)

Within decolonized structures and systems, funding agencies, peer review committees, research ethics boards and universities are informed by and respectful of Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies. Within these environments, policies, protocols and practices also reflect advanced knowledge and careful consideration of the harmful impact of colonizing research, which supports and promotes further decolonization.

## Decolonized Stem Environments

Within decolonized stem environments of university faculties and departments, as well as other knowledge generating institutions, Indigenous research is normalized, taught and encouraged. Indigenous researchers receive mentorship; they are widely funded and published, and their contributions are considered worthy of appointment, tenure and promotion. Overall, the research processes and products are inclusive and benefit Indigenous communities, collectives, organizations and Nations.





Indigenous health research in  
Canada often fails to engage  
**INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

## ICSR Targets

“Historically, Indigenous health research in Canada has often failed to engage Indigenous peoples and organizations as primary stakeholders or beneficiaries of evidence from research” (Morton Ninomiya & Pollock, 2017, p. 28). This colonial violence continues today as ways of knowing and being (roots, such as epistemology and ontology), research institutions (structure and systems, such as funders, peer reviewers, REBs, and ethical and academic processes), and practices/actions (stem environment, such as departments, faculty, individual researchers, research outputs and outcomes) combine to limit Indigenous peoples’ equitable access to resources (funding, appointment, promotion, tenure, etc.) and undermine the production of research outputs and outcomes that are anti-racist, culturally safety and for the direct benefit of ICCOs (Indigenous communities, collectives and organizations).

The BC NEIHR has named four structures and systems as targets for ICSR training/programs: 1) funders; 2) peer reviewers; 3) REBs/ethics/ethical processes; and 4) faculty evaluation standards/academic processes. However, it is important to understand that the entire research environment works to uphold and privilege colonial research and researchers over Indigenous research and researchers, which is what makes ICSR work so difficult - we cannot single out just one component and expect the whole environment to change. Not only is this complex environment resistant to change, its micro-environments are mutually reinforcing. Indeed, it was a challenge to visually conceptualize the research environment (in our tree metaphor) because of its complexity. Therefore, we acknowledge that there are limitations to isolating ICSR targets but we believe this is a good place to start.

## ICSR Target: Funders

Government and private agencies that shape research policies and provide research funding represent core environments where cultural safety is critical. Within the realm of research, what is valued gets funded. Regrettably, western research remains the gold standard upon which other forms of research are measured, while Indigenous methodologies and approaches often deemed sub-standard (Morton, Ninomiya & Pollock, N. 2017). The relative dearth of ICCO-led research also stems from the exclusion of Indigenous communities and organizations from directly receiving research funding, which enables institutions to continue to control the research agenda. Research funding application deadlines and the term of many grants (e.g., 1 year) can also create barriers for ICCO-led research projects, which typically take long to develop and to complete. Similarly, restrictions on funds for gifting and honoraria can make it difficult for communities to engage. A lack of safety is also revealed in funding criteria that do not consider the ethical implications of research conducted by those who do not demonstrate a respectful relationship with ICCOs. On the other hand, Indigenous organizations with a research mandate, such as the BC NEIHR, require transparent and accountable adjudication of their funding applications as well as greater access to funding opportunities and iterative review conducted by knowledgeable and culturally safe reviewers.

Recently, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) conducted an “Online Dialogue on Systemic Racism and Canada’s Health Research Funding System” (<https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52642.html>). Recommendations in the areas of funding, peer review and capacity development included:

- Increased representative of marginalized scholars and trainees in funding priorities
- Funding pools and/ or proportional funding for specific populations, such as racialized and Indigenous researchers
- A process for flagging, reporting and appealing discriminatory and racist reviews
- Addressing gaps in expertise on peer review panels in areas such as decolonized methodologies, and anti-racism
- Providing training on anti-racism approaches to research
- Mentorship opportunities for trainees and early career researchers marginalized by racism to participate in peer review, such as pairing junior reviewers with senior reviewers who identify with the same ethno-racial background.
- Leadership opportunities (e.g., Chair and Scientific Officer positions on peer review panels) to scholars marginalized by racism
- Expanding research excellence criteria in order to recognize mentorship, equity, diversity and inclusion, and anti-racism contributions, and other university service work, noting that much of this work often falls to researchers marginalized by racism.



Expanding Research  
**EXCELLENCE**



# Importance & Complexity of **INDIGENOUS WAYS**

## ICSR Target: Ethical Guidelines and Processes/REBs

Individuals who develop ethical guidelines and serve on Research Ethics Boards (REBs) are no less susceptible to colonial beliefs, misconceptions and assumptions than any other individual. The lack of understanding among Western REBs about the importance and complexity of Indigenous ways of knowing and being is rooted in different, and most often conflicting, worldviews and cultures (epistemology and ontology). It is therefore not surprising to discover that poor perceptions of Indigenous community risk can lead reviewers to make flawed assumptions about “ethical breaches”.

Unfortunately, Indigenous researchers, communities and trainees often experience harm through culturally unsafe structures rooted in racist, discriminatory, and stereotypical assumptions made about their research (design, epistemology, ontology, methodology, methods, etc.). For example, non-Indigenous reviewers often lack an understanding of Indigenous research relationships and protocols as well as their own biases. Indigenous researchers typically hold broader accountabilities (e.g., community, family, future generations, the land) about which western institutions are often unfamiliar (CIHR, 2020). REBs can also fail to recognize an ethical breach when one occurs. For instance, REBs sometimes fail to recognize the unethical way that epidemiological data are analyzed and shared, without inclusion of appropriate context related to the impact of ongoing racism against Indigenous peoples, as well the sharing (i.e., mobilization) of such data without the voices and perspectives of Indigenous peoples themselves (Allan & Smylie, 2015).

As well, some REBs approve research about an Indigenous community, collective or organization (ICCO) when there is no evidence of an established relationships between researcher(s) and ICCO before the research begins. Although the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS) Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada was first published in 2010, many structures and systems are still not fully implementing the policy. For example, ethical reporting guidelines do not always prompt researchers to explain how the research process adhered to Chapter 9 of TCPS 2 and how principles of Indigenous health research (e.g., OCAP®) were operationalized (Morton Ninomiya & Pollock, 2017).

## ICSR Target: Peer Reviewers

Historically, there has been a lack of both Indigenous participation in publication (particularly mainstream journals) as well as representation of Indigenous journal editors or reviewers. Non-Indigenous peer reviewers do not often possess the necessary cultural lens to respectfully and fairly review Indigenous submissions. Many are unfamiliar with Indigenous community-led research and/or lack training in Indigenous cultural safety. Similar to other reviewers (e.g., research funding), non-Indigenous journal reviewers do not always understand Indigenous research ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies and many do not consider Indigenous ethical principles in their reviews.

Within a colonial research environment, there is an assumption that certain processes (e.g., anonymous feedback) lead to high-quality publications, but there may be other ways to conceptualize this process (Jones, 2022). In addition to creating space for greater Indigenous representation, a decolonized approach might include greater accountability by reviewers in terms of their social and disciplinary position.

The peer review process would also benefit from greater accountability to ICCOs and recognition of Indigenous knowledge holders. For example, when possible, Indigenous community-based research should have at least one Indigenous community member review the submission. Since cultural safety is about addressing power imbalances, the inclusion of community members should be standard practice. Having said that, it is the responsibility of publishers to first ensure their environment is cultural safe for Indigenous community-based reviewers and that adequate compensation is provided to community member reviewers.

Another consideration is the role mentorship can play in improving the peer review process. As part of the core structure of the research environment, the peer review process needs to support, mentor and nurture the stem environment, which includes students and those more junior in training. Trainees should be provided opportunities early in their career to participate in peer review. For example, the BC NEIHR Indigenous Student Research Showcase publication had doctoral students act as peer reviewers who were mentored through the process by senior Indigenous scholars. This represents a culturally informed pathway for the next generation of Indigenous scholars, who come with a culturally grounded understanding of Indigenous worldviews and knowledges and are ready to take on peer review positions.



A Cultural Informed  
**PATHWAY**



# Within a Colonial Stem ENVIRONMENT

## ICSR Target: Faculty Evaluation Standards/Academic Processes

Non-Indigenous researchers are more likely to be the recipients of resources that benefit career trajectories, such as appointment, promotion, tenure, and awards. Who receives these resources is often heavily dependent on the number of funded grants, peer-reviewed publications – as first author, conference presentations and other scholarly products. This environment tends to be quite competitive and hierarchical (professors are ranked), often leading to an individualistic work culture that does not value research as service to community. Within a colonial stem environment, Indigenous researchers who engage in service-oriented community-led projects, are viewed as less successful and therefore receive fewer resources. Ironically, in the Canadian context, the development of healthy public policy and improvement of Indigenous health and wellness relies on the uptake of community-based research approaches (Richmond & Cook, 2016).

The root of Western epistemology has created biased standards of knowledge production - what is considered knowledge and how that knowledge should be obtained. Anti-Indigenous racism within these roots manifests as the privileging of Western knowledge systems over Indigenous knowledge systems. For instance, within this environment, the purpose of research is often academic discovery rather than community benefit or as a tool for Indigenous self-determination (Richmond & Cook, 2016). Indeed, in response to the federal government's first National Longitudinal Aboriginal Survey (1994), Indigenous communities declared that research should directly benefit community, for example, in the form of funding programs and services identified as needed through the research (O'Neil, Reading & Leader, 1998). Communities have also warned that academic research partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can perpetuate oppression, appropriation and denigration of Indigenous knowledges, resources, and culture depending on how the research focus is defined and the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers on research teams (Edwards, Barnes, McGregor & Brannelly, 2020).

Indigenous community-based research approaches, methodologies, methods and ethical processes require development and maintenance of relationships, as well as extended community engagement and accountability structures that often differ from those within university research environments. This means that Indigenous, community-based research typically takes longer to conduct than Western research. Enacting OCAP® principles such as community control and stewardship over research processes, decision-making and data in general, including extended consultation among partners, relationship-building and the development of MOUs (memorandum of understanding), is time-consuming (Alcock, Elgie, Richmond & White, 2017). Therefore, when academic success is measured by the number of publications produced or grants secured, Indigenous researchers who take the necessary time to work with community and focus on research that benefits community, are not only disadvantaged, they are also forced into an ethical dilemma not experienced by their non-Indigenous colleagues. In fact, Indigenous researchers are pulled in contradicting directions, as “pressures and deadlines for publication often make extended consultation [with community] on the contents of an article difficult” (p. 234). Indeed, Morton Ninomiya and Pollock (2017), who identify as non-Indigenous researchers who engage in Indigenous community-based research, articulate this dilemma based on their own experiences:

“There were also academic pressures to produce writing that offered critical and intellectual insight- discussing topics that extended beyond the research findings relevant to the community...There was discomfort in having to discern how much conceptual material was appropriate to write about on a study community members would not see as beneficial to the community, nor see value in reading. Pragmatically, it was also unclear which community members needed to be involved in the paper development and writing process... In reality, the community members most likely to read, contribute, and engage in academic writing were also those already carrying heavy workloads, often in leadership positions. Asking overburdened community leaders to contribute to and/or review draft papers aimed at academic audiences rarely felt reasonable or fair (p. 33).”



# The ICSR Process

With guidance from the BC NEIHR Governing Council, the BC NEIHR has created an **Indigenous Cultural Safety in Research (ICSR) Working Group** that consists of Indigenous academics and professionals who have knowledge and expertise in the fields of ICS and research.

The following considerations were key in guiding the work of the ICSR Working Group:

1. Respect for Indigenous values, knowledges, methodologies and decision-making practices;
2. Understanding that racism, specifically anti-Indigenous racism, continues to harm and discriminate against ICCOs, as well as Indigenous researchers and trainees, in all processes of research (e.g., grant applications, ethics review, etc.); and
3. Belief that BC post-secondary institutions, research funding agencies and REBs require ICS programs/training tailored to the context of research.

## The ICSR Working Group is tasked with:

- Developing research-related Indigenous cultural safety and anti-racism training curriculum and resources;
- Supporting the development of a BC Indigenous Health Research Ethics process; and
- Engaging with Research Ethics Boards and health research funders in discussions about Indigenous cultural safety and anti-racism in the review of applications.

# Interventions

Over the five-year term, the ICSR Working Group aims to recommend, plan, design and implement the following initiatives and programs:

## TARGET- Structure/Systems.

- Develop targeted training to REBs (re: review of Indigenous research protocols).
- Support the engagement of Indigenous community members in the REB and/or ethics review process.
- Develop a longterm Indigenous cultural safety plan for research training and practice.
- Support the creation of a BC Indigenous Community Research Ethics Board/Committee (governance).
- Facilitate the establishment of local Indigenous community and organizational REBs.
- Create a BC NEIHR funding opportunity to support the development of ICCO Research Ethics Frameworks. Create a database by region of existing ICCO Research Ethics Frameworks.
- Encourage post-secondary institutions, research funding agencies and other REBs to adopt anti-racism policies and implement meaningful strategies for practice. This includes, but is not limited to, resources committed to providing Indigenous cultural safety and anti-racism training specifically for non-Indigenous REB members, peer reviewers and researchers who want to engage in research activities with ICCOs.
- Support the development of accountability mechanisms whereby ICCOs are able to vet researcher(s) and/or file a complaint against researcher(s).
- Work with research funding agencies to create an iterative review process within their organization.
- Work in partnership with Research Ethics BC to conduct an Environmental Scan on the current practice of reviewing Indigenous research in existing research ethics applications to inform initiatives and policy change.
- Create video-based resources about how to bring Indigenous Cultural Safety into the peer review process.

INDIGENOUS CULTURAL SAFETY  
IN RESEARCH WORKING GROUP





# Meaningful & Culturally Safe **PLANS & PRACTICES**



## TARGET- Stem Environment

- Create guidelines and processes that ensure meaningful and culturally safe plans and practices in Indigenous health research relationships and projects.
- Working closely with interested ICCOs, develop, pilot and offer an Indigenous cultural safety training and certification process for BC NEIHR allied researchers and students. We will work with our institutional partners to encourage this training be available (and perhaps mandatory) for all research trainees and investigators.
- Host BC NEIHR Ethics Sharing Circles with Indigenous researchers and Indigenous graduate students to gather ethics-related experiences, reflections and suggestions to identify current gaps and barriers to ethics/ethical processes.
- Working with the BC NEIHR Indigenous Health Research Facilitators (IHRFs), create allyship resources, including “case studies” of good/wise practices.

The BC NEIHR ICSR program and trainings will be reviewed annually by the BC NEIHR Governing Council and Operational Team. Regular evaluation of our ICSR programs and trainings will help to ensure that we are meeting our commitment to maintaining excellence and reducing the harms of anti-Indigenous racism, with changes and revisions as required.

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