

Case Study 5: Strengthening Relationships with Indigenous Communities

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Community engagement needs to have a clear objective, where intentions are mentioned, and communication is transparent. Recognizing that indigenous communities in Canada have historical mistrust with the State and institutions, we want to ensure that we are engaging in engagement that is respectful, honest, not tokenistic, and sustainable. Engaging Indigenous communities in reconciliation efforts requires an understanding of their unique perspectives, historical challenges, and aspirations. By employing empathy mapping and journey mapping, we can create meaningful, respectful, and sustainable partnerships that address mistrust and capacity barriers.

Pillars of Engagement

When engaging with indigenous communities and organizations, we propose the following pillars of engagement: (1) Capacity Building, (2) Relationship Building, (3) Benefits for Indigenous Communities, and (4) Sustainability.

Empathy Mapping

Our Empathy mapping reveals the emotions, needs, pain points, and behaviors of Indigenous communities, enabling organizations like LIPs/RIFs to tailor their approaches. The key insights include:

1. What Indigenous Communities SAY:

Indigenous leaders express concerns about limited time and resources for external engagements, skepticism about whether their voices are genuinely valued, and the necessity for initiatives that deliver tangible benefits to their communities.

2. What They THINK:

Communities question the authenticity of reconciliation efforts, the potential benefits of partnerships, and whether these initiatives align with their priorities, such as cultural preservation and equitable opportunities.

3. What They FEEL:

Historical injustices foster deep-seated distrust, while unfulfilled promises contribute to frustration and skepticism. Indigenous communities often feel that external organizations do not prioritize their autonomy or self-determination.

4. What They DO:

In response, many decline invitations to participate, focus on internal priorities, and avoid partnerships perceived as tokenistic or misaligned with their values.

Empathy Mapping for Indigenous Engagement

SAY

Limited time and resources.
Voices often ignored.
Need genuine support.

THINK

Is this effort authentic?
Will this partnership benefit us?
Are their intentions genuine?

FEEL

Distrust due to historical injustices.
Frustration from past experiences.
Skepticism about intentions.

DO

Decline invitations.
Focus on internal priorities.
Avoid non-aligned partnerships.

Journey Mapping

Our Journey mapping visualizes the process of Indigenous engagement with LIPs/RIFs, identifying friction points and opportunities for improvement at each stage:

1. Initial Contact:

Outreach efforts are often impersonal and lack clarity about the mutual benefits of collaboration. To address this, organizations should personalize invitations, meet community leaders in their spaces, and clearly communicate the purpose and long-term vision of engagement.

2. Considering Participation:

Indigenous representatives face significant capacity barriers, such as time constraints and limited resources. Flexible scheduling, virtual meeting options, and financial support, such as travel stipends or honoraria, can reduce these barriers.

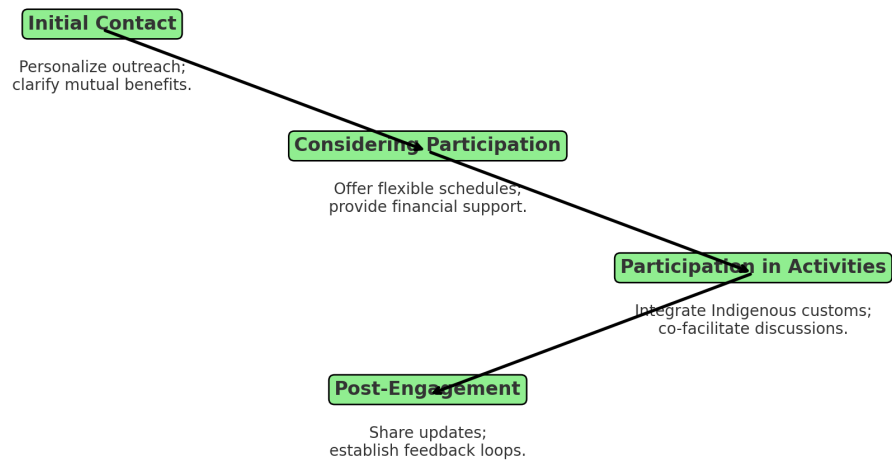
3. Participation in Activities:

Current events may lack cultural sensitivity or meaningful inclusion of Indigenous perspectives. Integrating traditional customs, such as opening ceremonies led by elders, and ensuring co-facilitation of discussions can create a more respectful and inclusive environment.

4. Post-Engagement:

Limited follow-up and a lack of tangible outcomes often erode trust. Regular updates on how their contributions are being implemented and establishing a continuous feedback loop demonstrate a genuine commitment to reconciliation.

Journey Mapping for Indigenous Engagement



Conclusion

Empathy mapping and journey mapping provide essential frameworks for designing reconciliation efforts that are authentic, respectful, and effective. By addressing mistrust and capacity barriers, LIPs/RIFs can foster stronger relationships with Indigenous communities, ensuring that reconciliation is not just a symbolic gesture but a meaningful and collaborative process.