

IndigeLab Network principles and protocols

Introduction to the IndigeLab Network (IN)

IN is made up of a core group of Indigenous, gender minority, international researchers as well as our students and lab staff. Our goal is to expand Indigenous theories of collectivity and change with a focus on methodologies and structures, and then use these insights to guide interventions in research culture and infrastructure.

Our core objectives are to:

- Create and sustain a diverse community of Indigenous gender minority researchers
- Mentor a generation of Indigenous and allied students/lab members
- Use IN as a space to practice and get better at the types of relations we want to see and be part of in academia
- Center Indigenous theories of change and ways of knowing, doing, and being in knowledge creation
- Describe, create, test, and implement research methods for building and maintaining research collectives in compromised spaces (e.g. academia, but not only)
- Impact research infrastructure¹ through partnership to better support Indigenous-led research
- Circulate research findings outside the Network

IN is funded by a Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Partnership Grant (#895-2023-1004). Memorial University is the host of this fund. Many core IN member institutions have dedicated in-kind support, formalized in MOUs and/or research agreements.

Governance & roles

- Day-to-day governance decisions are made with the two **Co-Directors** (monthly meeting) and the **IN Coordinator** (weekly meeting with one of the Co-Directors)
- **Network-wide consensus*** is required for major funding decisions (e.g. deciding on funding distribution and any major changes to funding distribution, adding partners). These are conducted during Core member monthly meetings and IN conferences
 - *Consensus means that everyone at the meeting agrees (even if unevenly). Then, the decision is recorded both in minutes and is sent out to the

¹ Following M. Murphy (2017), we mean material supports that allow flows of power, like paperwork, categories, doors, tools, forms, protocols, etc

Network. People who were not there can email in with concerns, if any, and Co-Directors can decide whether any concerns require a revisit of the consensus process.

- **Core IN members** gather monthly online and are part of consensus-based decision-making on key Network issues. Core IN members are eligible to receive funding and must complete the appropriate paperwork, including on-time annual in-kind contributions and transfer requests (as applicable), to receive/continue to receive funding
- **Point people** are core members or their lab members who oversee working groups, and have jurisdiction over how working groups are governed so long as they follow IN guidelines and protocols
- **Core member's students and lab members** fall under their PI/advisors' jurisdiction and are not considered core IN members for the purposes of decision making or governance
- **Partners** are not part of the governance structure and are exclusively involved in research outputs, though individuals from partner orgs may become core members, point people, working group members, or students/lab members of Core members
- **IN staff** include the Coordinator (FT), financial admin (PT), data manager (FT/PT), and communications (PT). They support the network and may participate in working groups but are not considered core members.

Principles

IN is premised on the goals and practices of:

- **Sharing, reciprocity, generosity:** of resources, encouragement, witnessing, and understanding flow from people and places of more to less, rather than equally exchanged assistance. We are expected to provide for one other this way.
- **Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and being,** which will look different for the various Indigenous Nations and communities we are part of, but share characteristics of relationality.
- **Safer spaces,** specifically for Indigenous members and gender minorities, where people are more able to express themselves and share their knowledge and experiences with minimum risk and maximum respect.
- **Reduce barriers, ease burdens, promote rest** for Network participation as much as possible.

Protocols

Introductions

- Introductions are expected at the start of meetings or events where not all people know each other.
- Introductions should include where you/your community are from, as well as who claims you if you're Indigenous.
- All participants in all IN events and activities are expected to use people's preferred pronouns. Correct yourself if you slip. Support others if they slip.

Attribution and permission

- Individual IN members retain the right to their own intellectual property and ideas and should receive attribution for them.
- Use other IN member's ideas and stories from IN events only with permission.
- For more detail, see the Data Protocol.

IN Core Meetings

Operating protocols

- Co-Directors oversee (responsible for scheduling, facilitating) core meetings.
- All Core IN members and the Coordinator are invited to monthly online meetings.
- The time of the IN core meeting changes every season (three times/year) and is based on when the greatest number of IN members can attend.
- These meetings are for mutual support, sharing, witnessing, and celebrating one another
- As such, most of the time, these meetings do not have agendas, but may include Network-wide updates.
- Network-wide consensus-based decision-making occurs at these meetings.
- Notes about decisions and roll call are taken for administrative purposes, but the content of discussions is never recorded.
- Dynamic consensus-based decisions are made through two processes: 1) They happen in an open meeting where all core members are invited, and absent members trust their peers to represent their interests. 2) Co-Directors decide whether there's appropriate group representation for any given decision and will re-open or postpone a decision if not.

Safer space protocols

- **Your Story, Your Choice:** Every IN core member decides which stories to share and which to keep. No one is expected to share their experiences, traumas, or stories.
- **What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas:** People share personal and professional things in these meetings that are only for those in the meeting. If you want to take something out of lab that isn't yours— someone else's actions, stories, ideas, or images, even if anonymized –get their consent.

- **Don't Yuck My Yum (Yes, And):** If what someone offers to the group isn't hurting anyone, don't disparage it. Instead, affirm and add (yes, and!).

Working Groups

Working groups are decentralized, and their topics and meeting processes are in the hands of working group members. Some high-level protocols exist:

Operating Protocols

- Working groups are proposed and run by Core IN members. The person who oversees a working group is called a Point Person. Each working group has a deputy or second Point person who takes up those duties if the main point person is not available
- All Core IN members and their students/lab members can request to join any working group. It is up to point people to decide what to do with these requests
- The Point Person can include additional people who are not core members
- The Point Person is responsible for overseeing and adapting safer space protocols as appropriate
- The IN coordinator attends all working groups to take notes and support the Point Person, including scheduling, unless otherwise requested and alternative arrangements are made with the Co-Directors. The Coordinator can attend to any needs the group has (scheduling, funding, questions about data plan), who will route it to the best next step if it's not her area of responsibility
- All working groups have a data management protocol specific to their group, based on the IN template but adapted to their needs. Point people are responsible for ensuring this is complete in the first months of a group's formation
- When a working group has stalled (the point people and deputies are regularly or completely unable to attend meetings):
 - the IN Coordinator will determine (by email or meeting) whether there is interest by the rest of the working group members in continuing
 - if not, the dissolution of working groups protocol in the data management plan proceeds
 - if so, new point people are chosen from remaining members and the working group resumes
 - original point people are welcome to rejoin, but will do so as regular members

Conflict resolution

All Core IN members and partners are brought into IN by an original IN member (vouching). All members of a working group are either a core IN member or have been brought in by the Point Person or Core IN member (vouching).

Principles:

- **Calling into relations, not calling out bad behaviour:** “Calling in” is a way to remind each other of the specific accountabilities and relations that have been breached. “It is a way to address relationships with accountability, respect, and generosity. We can’t expect people to change their actions, words, or tendencies without first calling them into how those things affect you or others. We can’t expect people to read our minds or even our body language sometimes. We do expect people to make mistakes, and sometimes cause harm.”²
- **Vouching:** All IN core and working group members are brought into the group because someone vouched for them, providing a recommendation that this person would fit the values and processes of IN. If you vouched for someone, it is your responsibility to keep an eye on them and call them into good relations when appropriate
- **Decolonial non-violent communication**³: is “a decolonial and trauma-informed lens [that provides a] framework for understanding how and why conflict occurs along with tools to explore compassionate reconnection following rupture”.⁴ This framework is below.

*Decolonial non-violent communication framework steps:**Starting with yourself:*

1. Pay attention to your body. How does it feel?
2. Pay attention to your feelings.
3. Name the feeling.
4. Identify your needs.
5. Choose what comes next:
 - a. Self-reflect (this route means many of your needs may not be met)
 - b. Set a boundary (this route means many of your needs may not be met)
 - c. Make a request of the other person, ensuring there is room for them to say no. This route means that many of your needs may be met, but they can say no.
 - d. Make a request of a point person or Co-Director for support. They may refer you back to options a-c.

No protocol on conflict resolution can (or should) be exhaustive. These are guidelines based on principles. If you feel someone in the Network is causing an issue for the Network or its members:

² CLEAR. (2025). CLEAR lab book. Memorial University.

³ Based on Meenadchi. (2024). “Introduction to Decolonizing Non-Violent Communication,” Together Rising as an Environmental Community (TREC). url: <https://www.trec.org/webinars/introduction-to-decolonizing-non-violent-communication/>

⁴ Ibid.

Do	Avoid
• If you vouched for someone, keep an extra eye out and call them in if they're straying • Talk to the person who is causing the issue following the non-violent communication framework below • Mention it to the point person or Co-Director so they know what is happening in their space • If you don't think you can talk to the person causing the issue, talk to the appropriate point person or Co-Director who can help with next steps • If it's a large or complicated issue, the Co-directors may confer with each other, point people, and/or the person who vouched before calling in	• Talking to other IN members (non-point people) about it before talking to the person causing the issue or the point person/Co-Director as appropriate • Calling out in a group setting

Bringing in new partners and Core members

- Normally, new IN core members will be part of working groups or IN projects before they become core members
- New core members and partners must be vouched for by an existing core member
- A decision to bring in a new partner or core member will be made by consensus during an IN-wide meeting, which will include discussion of complications for funding, reporting, and vouching

Paperwork

- The Co-Directors and Coordinator will do everything in their power to lessen the burden of paperwork on Network members, including doing it ourselves, or offering templates, workshops, and one-on-one meetings to get it done together
- An in-kind contribution document is required of any Network member who received funding the previous fiscal year, and after the first year (2023-2024) the amount cannot be \$0. It must be submitted on time. We also love when IN members who are not receiving funding fill out a contribution document!
- The Co-Directors/Coordinator will use a one-reminder rule for resources (funding, workshop or conference opportunities). For any paperwork required to access funding or other resources, they will send an invitation once, send a reminder once, and then leave it be. We love it when IN members revisit an email from months or

even years ago asking if a resource is still available, and we will do everything in our power to get it to you if it is. Note that many resources are time sensitive

Funding

The common practice of IN funding is that all core members receive the same amount of money annually (in USD or CAD) and can request additional funding in years of need. If there is a scarcity issue with funding, decisions on allocation will come to a Network-wide meeting for consensus.

This document was finalized via a series of consensus-based decision-making meetings between May 2025 and Sept 2026, where each section and line were reviewed, edited if necessary, and approved by consensus (agreement to move forward) by all attendees. Both Co-Directors were present at all meetings, and a different group of Core IN members (and in May 2025, some of their lab members) attended the series of meetings. Thank you to everyone who participated.