

# Talking Together to Improve Health

## Literature Review Executive Summary

*Locally Driven Collaborative Project funded and supported by Public Health Ontario*

The project team conducted a review of both grey and academic literature that explore strategies, approaches, and principles of engagement and collaboration between Indigenous Peoples and public sector agencies in North America and Australia.

### Project Goal

This research project is to answer the following research question: “What mutually beneficial, respectful, and effective principles and practices of engagement between First Nations communities and public health units in Northeastern Ontario can be identified as an important step in working toward improved opportunities for health for all”.

### Principles

#### **Respect:**

This principle focuses on the need for non-Indigenous Peoples to understand, acknowledge, and appreciate both the history and current context of Indigenous Peoples. The literature outlined a number of cultural competency practices that can be seen as a pre-cursor to any engagement activities.

#### **Trust:**

Trust was identified as necessary for establishing and maintaining a mutually beneficial partnership. As many historical and ongoing events have led to considerable distrust by many Indigenous Peoples, for any successful engagement to occur, trust must be a central consideration.

#### **Self-determination:**

Partnerships with Indigenous Peoples have been identified to be more successful if the principle of self-determination is considered and understood.

#### **Commitment:**

Commitment is important for sustaining long-term and effective partnerships. Practices that support co-learning and power sharing can foster mutual responsibility. Flexibility with regards to funding structures and timelines are also required to support a fulsome engagement process.

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# Wise Practices

## Respect:

Practices that honour the diversity of the unique Indigenous cultures are recommended. Formal acknowledgment practices, such as workplace signs that identify the traditional owners of the land, further foster this principle.

## Trust:

Early engagement, working with respected Indigenous members, inclusivity of Indigenous members and genders, and appropriate and ongoing communication are all likely to build trust.

## Self-determination:

This can be encouraged by ensuring collaborations are driven by Indigenous communities, providing opportunities to build Indigenous workforce capacity, building on the strengths of the Indigenous communities, and having strong Indigenous representation in the decision-making process.

## Commitment:

Progressive leadership is required to support flexible funding structures and timelines. Additional supporting practices include purposeful Indigenous hiring, ongoing reflection, visible community presence, and ensuring that Indigenous communities validate the findings and that their perspectives are included.

## Conclusion

These four principles and their associated practices present a synthesis of findings that have been utilized, suggested, or recommended to engage with Indigenous communities. This is an important foundational first step that provides supportive context and informs the next phases of this project, which include a survey to Ontario public health units, key informant interviews, and gathering information within First Nations communities.

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**The views expressed in this publication are the views of the project team, and do not necessarily reflect those of Public Health Ontario.**