

INDIGENOUS INFORMATION GOVERNANCE
REGIONAL INFORMATION GOVERNANCE CENTRE
CONCEPT PAPER - BC

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Purpose: to implement a national strategy to address national and regional issues in data governance, surveillance and research, fully enacting the regional infrastructure required to support the national First Nations Information Governance Centre. The proposed national strategy is based upon best practices and recommendations of the Tripartite British Columbia First Nations Data Governance Initiative, of which many of the solutions are transferable across Canada.

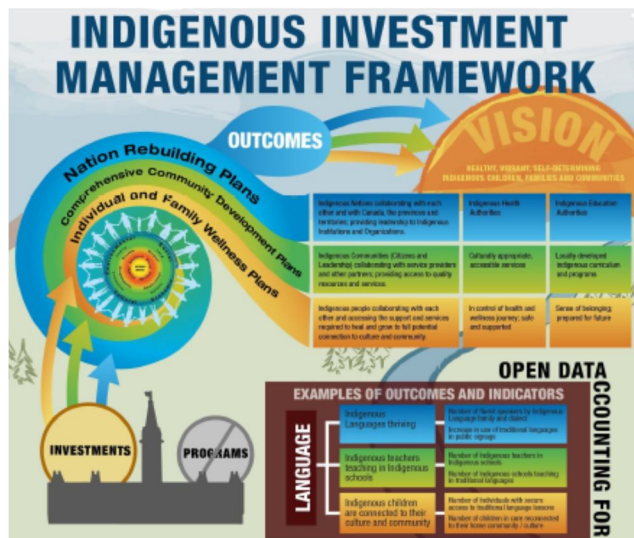
VISION

Governments (First Nations, Federal and British Columbia) have timely access to quality data and information to plan and account for investments and outcomes in First Nations well-being. BC FN Data Governance Initiative Vision

Indigenous Control of Indigenous Data - FN National Vision

...Indigenous Communities working collaboratively with other governments as Nations, developing plans, building governance and management capacity and transitioning back to self-governance, each documenting our own progress towards our vision of healthy, self-determining and vibrant indigenous citizens, communities and Nations and sharing our own stories with Canadians and with the world.

Indigenous Nations believe that a true partnership based on recognition and reconciliation can be developed so that First Nations take the lead, supported by Canada, the provinces and territories, in building Community-driven, Nation-based data governance capacity that will enable the accounting for relationships, investments and outcomes.

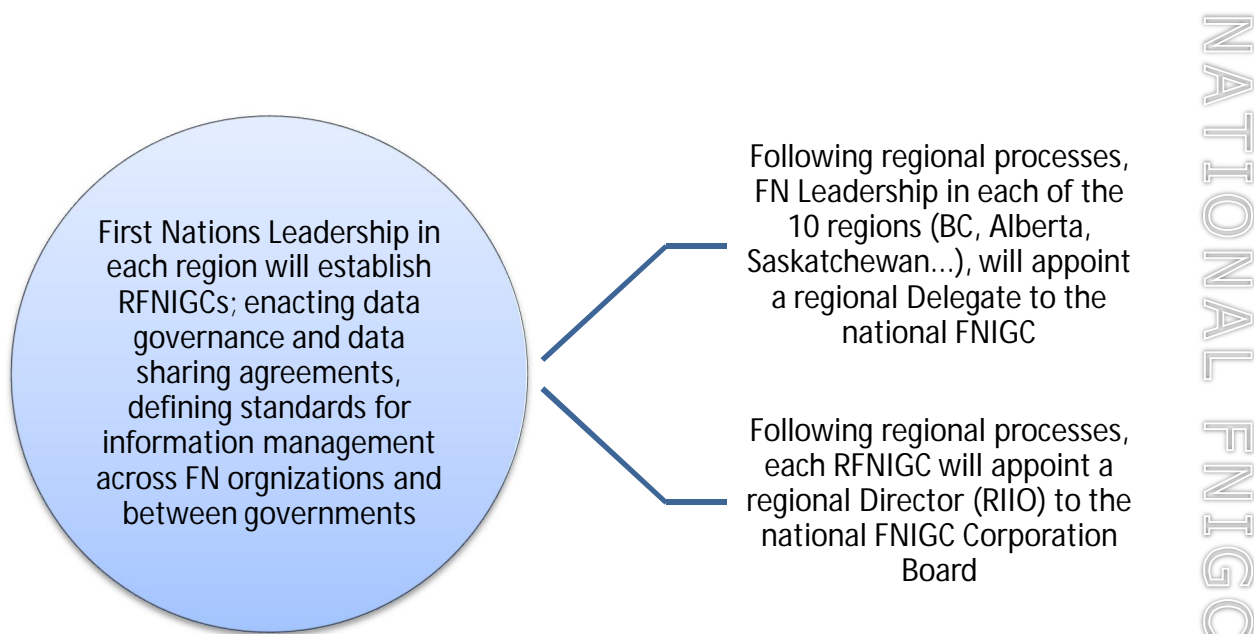


It is envisioned that the Chiefs of each province/territory will establish and govern over, Regional First Nations Information Governance Centres (RFNIGCs). These Centres will hold common functions but will take the form that is appropriate for each region. First Nations leadership will collaborate with other governments to establish reporting standards within their region, under a national framework, the objective being Indigenous control of Indigenous data.

The Chiefs will collaborate with other governments, in reporting on the well-being of their citizens at a *population* level and also on the status of *each Nation: reporting on Community Development and Nation Rebuilding*. The RFNIGCs will function as *regional organizations*; the *members* of the national FNIGC (as per their existing bylaws) and through regional processes, each region will continue to select a leadership Delegate and a Director (Regional Indigenous Information Officer – RIIO) to represent the region on the national FNIGC board. The national FNIGC reports to the AFN Chiefs in Assembly.

SUMMARY

It is proposed that a national strategy be put in place and funded to formally establish Regional FN Information Governance Centres in each province and territory, under the guidance of the Chiefs of each region, in a similar fashion to what the Chiefs of Alberta have already done in establishing the Alberta FNIGC. The Centres will serve as regional data centres supporting FN governments and service organizations within the province/territory in which they function. First Nations organizations will align under a common Investment Management Framework developed by the regional leadership, to standardize planning, managing and reporting within their region and across sectors.

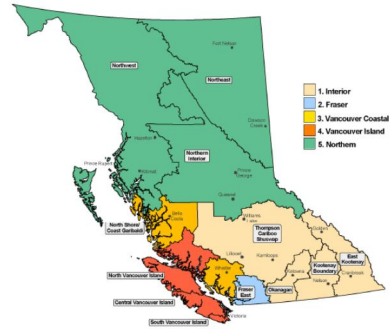


Each province and territory will determine their own processes and structures for the RFNIGCs. It is proposed that a common forum be established in the Assembly of First Nations. Currently, the national FNIGC board reports to this Assembly and the board co-chair seat is reserved for the national AFN. In BC, the AFN Regional Chief will act as the Chair of the BC FNIGC, playing a key role in data custodianship. In BC, the FNIGC will align with the 5 geographic sub-regions and leadership caucus structures. The BC FNIGC will adhere to the Seven Directives given by BC First Nations leadership in establishing the First Nations Health Authority and Health Council, the first Directive being Community-driven, Nation-based.

Within the Interior Region of BC, First Nations have established a Community-driven, Nation-based approach to governance transition and service transformation. Following this structure, the 54 FN Communities within the Interior region have re-aligned themselves as a 7 Nation Executive to interface with the Interior Health Authority. This structure ensures that each

Nation's governance interests can be advanced, with support from one another, while health service transformation is occurring.

Data Sharing Agreements including standards for Indigenous open data will be developed collaboratively with federal and provincial governments, nationally, regionally and locally, in order to respond to the different interests and issues in each jurisdiction. RFNIGCs will formally align with the national FNIGC, as regional organizations; however, reporting will align with each region's respective provincial/territorial service standards. Auditable Indigenous information management systems that interface with provincial/territorial systems will be available to all Indigenous governments and organizations, on and off reserve.



Alberta has already established a Regional AFNIGC which is primarily funded by Health Canada. Quebec First Nations are working collaboratively to build data governance and information management capacity, working with their government partners to address their unique needs. Other regions have also organized themselves to accommodate their interests; in BC there is the BC First Nations Data Governance Initiative. What is needed is a National Data Governance Strategy that aligns these regional approaches with broader political and reporting reform initiatives across governments.

REPORTING REFORM

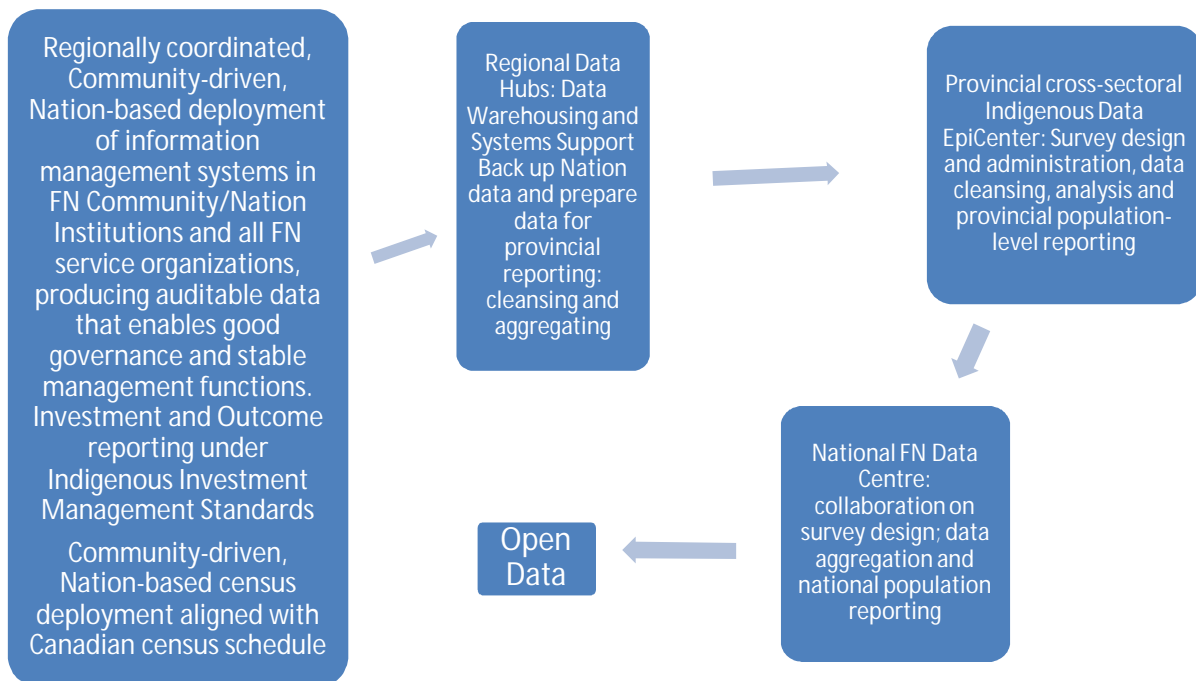
National reporting will not be by program, but by thematic area describing the current developmental state of each Indigenous Community and Nation, following an agreed upon set of high level wellbeing outcomes, indicators and minimum data elements. Nations will provide comprehensive, outcome-based reports to their citizens and also report to the general Canadian population and the world, confirming that funding is spent in the right ways, on the right things!



Nations will identify their non-status citizens through the administration of a Nation-based Census aligning with the same cycle as the Canadian Census. The well-being of non-status citizens will be included in Nation based reporting and Nations will work with each other and with the other governments on building identity management standards.

Incrementally, **data governance** and **information management capacity (knowledge, tools and instruments)** will be built. Planning and reporting will shift to a Community-driven, Nation-based model. Investments will be realigned with Community Development and Nation Rebuilding plans, with funding included to carry out governance functions and to facilitate uninterrupted development along a continuum. A data governance transition strategy will be developed in each region and coordinated nationally, to incrementally transition from program reporting to nation based reporting and to manage the change necessary at all levels – this is transformative change.

It is envisioned that under a new Indigenous Investment Management Framework, the existing federal civil servants that currently manage programs, will be realigned under Nation-based transition and development teams. These teams will support governance, planning, economic development, social programs, infrastructure... and other functions. Civil servants will all work together as one unit, assigned to assist with development and implementation of specific Comprehensive Community Plans and Nation Rebuilding Plans through which to manage investments and enable Individual and Family Wellness plan implementation.



To begin this process, Regional Indigenous Data Governance Champions will be funded in each of the ten (10) regions to work with the National Data Governance Champion/Liaison, to assist with the foundational work required to establish the RFNIGCs, and to formally align regional processes with the national FNIGC structures. **Regional Data Charters** will be developed, based on the *BC First Nations Data Governance Strategic Framework*, which was signed by the First Nations Health Council (FNHC), the British Columbia Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation (MARR) and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (then Aboriginal and Northern Development Canada).

These 10 Regional Indigenous Data Governance Champions will also assist with the formation of a consulting body supporting Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada's (INAC)'s Simplified Reporting Initiative engagement within their respective regions. They will initially assist with the development of a regional environmental scan detailing the community level data governance capacity and systems in use and they will introduce the various planning and governance tools that First Nations have already developed, such as those developed under the BC FNDGI. The BC FNDGI Initiative will transition to the National First Nations Data Governance Initiative with each region sharing their work to date. There is the potential for a restructure of the AFN Advisory Councils and supporting bodies, to align with the new Community-driven, Nation-based Indigenous Investment Management Framework.

NATION TO NATION

The Government of Canada has committed to establishing a **Nation to Nation** relationship. This relationship reset will require a new way to report on this relationship, and also on the outcomes of the relationship, both within Canada and at the United Nations. The new Community-driven, Nation-based Indigenous Investment Management Framework that is being proposed aligns all federal and provincial investments under a common structure.

By moving towards a new way of working together, Canada and provincial/ territorial governments, will collaborate with First Nations in Community Development and Nation Rebuilding, working together to implement the **calls to action**.

During the process of colonization, the Indigenous Nations of Canada went from



recognition to redundancy within a very short time. For the most part, the entities that are now recognized as Indian Bands, were extended family groups living together to support one another as a semi-independent, socio-economic unit. *Indian Bands are not Nations!* These family groups or Indian Bands, united to function as confederates (Nations); Nations that developed over centuries, speaking a common language, sharing a common creation story and knowing a common land as their primary resource base known as their traditional or ancestral territories.

Some of these Nations operated as even broader confederacies with thousands of citizens, and they established trade across these alliances, and more broadly as required. Warfare was sometimes necessary during periods when resources were scarce and these alliances were especially important at these times. These family/community groups formed the primary governing units of these Nation confederacies.

Historic policy took children from families, broke these historic community alliances that were Nations, and dismantled the sophisticated governing and economic structures of the strong Indigenous Nations that had existed for thousands of years. For the most part, implementation of these policies has resulted in impoverished, disconnected and in many instances, dysfunctional people living under an identity of an Indian as a member of a Band on a federal reserve and under health and safety laws inconsistent with the general population. Nationhood, family clans and citizenship were replaced with a colonial identity and parents and grandparents witnessed their children being asked to leave the reserve, as they did not qualify for Indian status.

Despite this oppressive recent history, many of Canada's Indigenous Nations have held on to

their languages and traditional knowledge; they know how to govern effectively and how to care for their people and their environments but cannot do so under the current program oriented system. In reality, most communities already collaborate; it's the scarcity of resources and the fear of not getting anything from a proposal call that leads First Nations to compete.

We are at a critical junction in Canadian history and without significant and immediate change, Canada will not be able to reconcile relationships and



address the past injustices. Indigenous youth will not be able to reconnect with their true indigenous identity, from which comes a sense of belonging and we will continue to hear their stories of anguish. When relationships change, environments can change and when environments change, circumstances and in turn, behaviours can change. This is called healing. The time for true Nation to Nation relationships is now.

The Indian Act only recognizes Indian Bands as legal entities but many First Nations Communities have retained their affiliations as Nations and have established tribal councils or Nation councils, to advance their governing interests. These entities have had to become corporate entities such as not-for-profit societies to be recognized.

Disaggregation of the Nations during colonization has contributed to the contemporary lack of capacity in some smaller First Nations; Nation entities are not recognized under the Indian Act. In BC, there are over 200 Indian Bands, (First Nations Communities) and across Canada, over 600. This large number of individual entities, some with very small populations and comprised of only one or two family groups today, and others with thousands of members, has made it extremely difficult for the government of Canada to establish meaningful relationships and advance their commitments.

However, a true Nation to Nation relationship is not a relationship between the federal government and individual Indian Bands. The reality of the situation is that the 200+ FN Communities in British Columbia align with fewer than 30 Indigenous Nation Confederates; 7 Indigenous language families that include less than 40 Indigenous language dialects, as identified in the following list:

1. Anishnaubemowin
2. Dakelh (C̓Bʰ)
3. Dane-Zaa (C̓ɔ ɔ)
4. Dane-Zaa (C̓ɔ ɔ) | ɔʰΔɔɔΔɔ (Nēhiyawēwin)
5. Denezāgéʼ
6. Dene Kʼe
7. Diitiidʔaatx
8. Éy7á7juuthem
9. Gitsenimx
10. Hailhzaqvla
11. Hulʼqʼumiʼnumʼ / Halqʼeméylem / həñqəmiñəñ
12. Ktunaxa
13. Kwakʷwala
14. Łingít
15. Nedutʼen
16. Nəxʷsɬʼaʔəmúcən
17. Nisg aʼa

18. Nłeʔkepmxcín
19. Nsyilxcən
20. Nuučaañuł
21. Nuxalk
22. Oowekyala / 'Uiíkala
23. Pəntl'áč
24. Secwepemctsín
25. SENĆOŦEN / Malchosen / Lkwungen / Semiahmoo / T'Sou-ke
26. She shashishalhem
27. Ski:xs
28. Sk̓wxwú7mesh sníchim
29. Sṁalgyax
30. Státimcets
31. Tāltān
32. Tse'khene
33. Tse'khene
34. Tsilhqot'in
35. Witsuwit'en
36. Xaad Kil / Xaaydaa Kil (Haida)
37. ᑕᐢᐱᐢᐱᐢᐱᐢ (Nēhiyawēwin)
38. enaksialakala / a''isalakala

Recognizing Indigenous languages of Canada as heritage languages in legislation is a first step in reconciliation and in re-establishing Indigenous governance at the Nation level. Tracking the rebuilding of these languages is critical as language and culture are central in Indigenous governance. Indigenous languages contain the ecological knowledge of each Nation's respective traditional territories and also the understandings of the relationships of the people to their lands, of people to people, and of Nations to Nations.

In British Columbia 203 First Nations Communities align with 7
Indigenous Language Families: there are 38 Language Dialects, spoken
within 28 Indigenous Nations.

Nation to Nation relationships are feasible!

NATIONAL FIRST NATIONS INFORMATION GOVERNANCE CENTRE

At present, upon approval by the FNIGC Board, any First Nation organization that is established and accepted within each region, *according to regional processes*, may apply for and be granted membership in the FNIGC Corporation as a regional organization. The regional organization appoints the Delegate and Director to the national FNIGC. It is *assumed* that there are regional

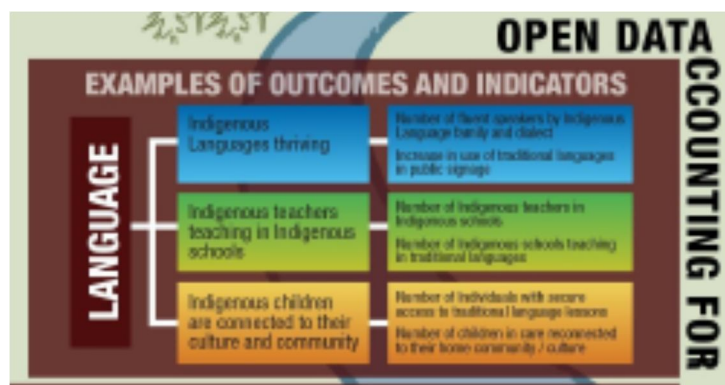
processes in place to carry out these delegation functions. The reality is that in some instances, there are no formal regional processes in place to coordinate data governance interests beyond health, or to confirm who will be the regional Delegate and Director to the FNIGC.

Since the FNIGC is a national governance-related institution, it is believed that it should be *regulated* by First Nations leadership from across Canada and *directed* by individuals that are professionals in data and research, holding senior data stewardship responsibilities for their particular region. At this time, the majority of Directors on the FNIGC Board have specific health related interests and some function as Regional Coordinators for the surveys, in their home regions. In order to assume a more broad based data governance function and to separate governance from management, it is believed that these positions should be held by individuals with specialized backgrounds; formal training in research and data governance with the ability to act as the Provincial Data Steward within the RFNIGC, as a regional Indigenous Information Officer (RIIO).

The AFN has existing infrastructure and relationships to build upon. At present, the national AFN may appoint up to two (2) directors to the FNIGC Board. Further, all First Nations Chiefs within a given region (provinces and territories) are able to vote for their AFN Regional Chief and attend AFN meetings. Without creating a new society, all of the Chiefs within British Columbia would be considered to be members of the British Columbia FNIGC Council, unless they explicitly state otherwise. When in Assembly, they would appoint one (1) delegate to vote at the FNIGC Annual Assembly as the member of the national FNIGC.

The Chiefs would not, however, be able to serve as Directors of the FNIGC; this function would be reserved for the regional Indigenous Information Officer. These RIIOs would be new positions created in each province and territory, with shared investments from federal and provincial/territorial governments. At a regional level, the Chiefs would be data custodians; the RIIOs would be the data stewards.

The IIO will work collaboratively with their corresponding senior provincial/territorial Information Officer in each region, with each other and with First Nations, federal and provincial/ territorial governments, implementing tripartite surveillance and reporting standards. The RIIO will also be the Chief Executive Officer of their RFNIGC.



The IIOs will work within their respective regions with the data stewards from each of the First Nations regional organizations (in BC, for example, with the First Nations Health Authority, First Nations Schools Association, Aboriginal Child Care Society...). Following an approved regional Collaboration and Engagement Framework, the RIIOs and regional organizations will work

together, coordinating data collection and reporting activities and enabling Community-driven, Nation-based data sovereignty.

It is recommended that the RIIOs from each region **be appointed** by the members of the RFNIGC to the national FNIGC Board, to bring forward the data stewardship interests of the region. The current FNIGC by-laws state that one director is to **be appointed** from each region by the members of each respective region, according to regional processes.

Regional FN service organizations, such as the First Nations Health Authority and First Nations Schools Association in British Columbia, will be advisors to the regional FNIGC IIO, in coordination of surveys, data warehousing and in assisting with capacity building activities.

First Nations regional organizations will be aligned under a common *Strategic Framework for Collaboration and Engagement*, transitioning over time, to a standardized planning, management and reporting regime with a common objective of enabling implementation of Individual and Family health and wellness plans, Community Development and Nation Rebuilding plans.

BC GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

In British Columbia, the province has been structured under broad geographic regions for purposes of service delivery. For example, for health service delivery, the province has established 5 Regional Health Authorities, as well as one provincial Health Authority. The First Nations of B.C. have aligned themselves with these 5 sub-regions for collaboration purposes.



REGIONAL CAUCUSES AND REGIONAL TABLES

At the regional level, regional caucuses and regional tables will provide the opportunity for community-driven, nation-based decision-making. First Nations share information and perspectives, set direction on regional health matters, and appoint their representatives to the First Nations Health Council through the Regional Caucuses. Regional caucuses and sub-regional caucuses ensure that First Nations leadership provide political direction and advocacy on behalf of their communities and Nations and that this direction feeds into the Regional Tables. Under the new health governance arrangement, this role of the Regional Caucuses will continue.

Further, each Regional Caucus will be supported to establish a Regional Table composed of a group of regional political leaders and health directors that carries out the work mandated by the Regional Caucus.

For example, in the Interior Region, the 54 First Nations Communities have restructured themselves as a 7 Nation collaborative, known as the Interior Region Nation Executive. This body addresses health governance issues and has established a *Partnership*

Accord with both the Interior Region Health Authority and the First Nations Health Authority.

For the past 3 years, BC First Nations have collaborated in advancing their data governance interests through the BCFNDGI¹. The BC First Nations Data Governance Champion has

¹ www.bcfndgi.com

established a Terms of Reference with the First Nations Health Authority and the First Nations Health Council, so that the 12 Demonstration Sites and the Data Governance Champions have a forum through which to engage with and report to First Nations leadership and service providers, on the data governance projects.

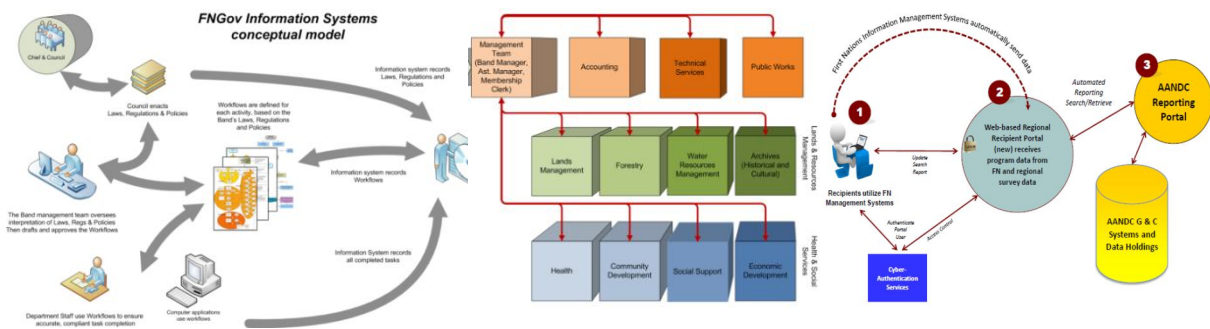
Under this structure, the Nations are moving their governance interests along at the same time as they work together to transform health and wellness services. As transformation has unfolded, the FNHA has staffed regional teams under a Regional Director, bringing planning and management expertise closer to First Nations Communities. The FNHA regional team works directly with communities and Nations, to move their processes along and also interface with the provincial health system staff.

Ownership and control of data are critical to effective governance. It is recommended that data governance functions be added to these regional teams, funded by the federal government as a governance transition function. British Columbia Region INAC staff could also work as part of these regional development teams, transitioning to an **Indigenous public service agency**.

Now that the province is moving beyond health service reform to address the broader determinants of wellbeing (as evidenced by the Memorandum of Understanding between MARR and the FNHC), expansion of partnerships is necessary and the 5 regional tables are being engaged to provide guidance on the development of these broad-based strategies.

It is proposed that in British Columbia, Community-driven, Nation-based Indigenous groups of a particular sub-region provide custodial oversight in data governance. These groups would collaborate at the provincial level, where they would identify a leader to act as Regional Data Custodian; the BC delegate to the national FNIGC. It is further proposed that tripartite agreements be established within each region, to coordinate provincial/territorial agencies and First Nations service organization participation in Community Development and Nation Rebuilding under a regional Collaboration Framework, supporting governance transition activities, such as the development of the Data Governance Strategy.

Data hubs in each of the 5 sub-regions would facilitate Nation-based data back up and aggregation, cleansing and reporting. The Nations would collaboratively govern these data centres at the sub-regional level and also at the provincial/territorial level and the national levels, through the AFN structures, accounting for each level of data aggregation and facilitating the reporting on relationships, investments and outcomes. Sub-regional data would be backed up at the provincial First Nation Data Centre and as appropriate, cleansed and aggregated for reporting.



A new way of investing is required at the Treasury Board level that associates investments directly with agreed upon outcomes at the community and Nation levels, not with programs that require managing at multiple levels. Investments in management capacity at the community, Nation and organizational level are critical in achieving high standards of accountability and transparency demanded by all Canadians and the high standard of services that Indigenous citizens deserve.

In the Interior Region of British Columbia, under the new health governance structure, it is the Nations working together who decide where sub-regional investments will be made with the technical leads recommending how best to use the resources to achieve the goals of the various plans. Equity in access and standards of service/care are key principles in budgeting.

The Nations of British Columbia all embrace Community Planning and Nation Rebuilding as the underpinnings of transitioning back to self-government and believe that these plans should be invested in directly by both federal and provincial governments, following their existing constitutional authorities. The Nations also believe that it is they that should be reporting on their own wellbeing; not the government of Canada.

The Nations of the Interior are once again collaborating, instead of competing with each other. They acknowledge that their territories did not overlap, but rather, the people did and that they still do today. They agree that it is in the best interest of each of the Nations to work together to ensure that *all Indigenous people are strong, safe and supported, wherever they reside.*

BC First Nations Seven Directives that guide transformation:

1. Community-driven, Nation-based
2. Increase First Nations decision-making and control
3. Improve services
4. Foster meaningful collaboration and partnership
5. Develop human and economic capacity
6. Be without prejudice to First Nations interests
7. Function at a high operational standard

Many Nations were expressing their rights to govern, even before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report was published; some just starting community development activities and others well along the road to Nation rebuilding. Many of these leading First Nations began with a vision statement similar to the one at the beginning of this document.

The Seven Directives developed by the First Nations leadership in British Columbia under the governance transition activities helped build the consensus decision to undertake the transfer of health services to a First Nations authority. These Directives are holistic and it is proposed that they be used as guiding principles for all tripartite relationships and investments, as First Nations move along the continuum of Community Development and Nation Rebuilding.

Information management and systems and the data that they generate, are tools of governance. They provide us with the evidence required to make good investment decisions, to affect good policy and to account for the desired outcomes.

The BC FNDGI has documented the diversity in data governance and information management capacity and approach that is the reality on the ground for First Nations. The diversity of approach to management is concerning.

In many instances, third party management can be directly associated with the lack of management systems, case management systems, document management systems, policies, etc. The current federally imposed program model also leads to many smaller or less able communities not getting ahead. With no ability to write proposals and manage projects, communities will likely never get to a state of wellbeing. The current program-driven contributions and reporting model must change.

The truth is there are systems available to manage these investments and those First Nations using case management and documents management systems are generally what would be considered high functioning communities. However the reality is that the communities that

Community-driven, Nation-based Data Sovereignty

**Reporting on the state of Indigenous
Nations and the wellbeing of
Indigenous Communities and Citizens
Information Management Systems
deployed in all FN Communities and
Organizations**

**Common tripartite planning,
management and reporting
standards across all FN governments,
organizations/institutions**

could most benefit from these systems generally don't have access as funding is not universally available for data governance and information management, at appropriate levels.

CONCLUSION

A shift must be made; from federal and provincial governments building big systems to try and report on outcomes associated with programs, to investments in Indigenous governments and service agencies, having appropriate systems to do the work that they do daily and to facilitate the reporting required to ensure accountability at all levels; to report on the wellbeing of Indigenous Nations, Communities and citizens.

First Nations in each of the regions across Canada, must work with each other and with their government partners within their respective regions, (but under national standards embedded in a national strategy) to establish 10 (ten) Regional First Nations Information Governance Centres assisting Indigenous communities and Nations with data governance and information management capacity building, with census/survey development and administration and with data warehousing and reporting and with information technology deployment and maintenance.

A national Indigenous data governance strategy associated with a new Indigenous Investment Management Framework is the foundation for Nation Rebuilding and for establishing true Nation to Nation relationships between Indigenous Governments and the Government of Canada.

