



Indigenous Data Governance Communique

National Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit

13th June 2023, Cairns, QLD

This Communique is addressed to all individuals and entities involved in the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination, and reuse of data and data infrastructure in Australia.

The Communique reports the outcomes of the 2nd National Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit convened by MaiaM nayri Wingara, the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, and the Lowitja Institute in June 2023. Over 130 Indigenous¹ delegates from every State and Territory were joined by international experts from Aotearoa (New Zealand), Canada, and the United States.

Data are a cultural, strategic and economic asset for Indigenous Peoples across the globe. But our isolation from the data ecosystem results in data focused on Indigenous Peoples as the problem. On data that are: blaming; aggregated; decontextualised; deficit; and of restricted access (BADDR data)². Existing data infrastructure does not recognise our knowledges and worldviews, meet our data needs, or make data accessible to us.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty asserts Indigenous rights to govern Indigenous data's creation, collection, ownership, and application³. Indigenous rights over data are supported in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)⁴. Indigenous Data Governance serves as the mechanism for realising Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles and operates through two interconnected modes:

1. Indigenous Governance of Data; and,
2. Indigenous Data for Governance.

The 2023 Summit progressed shared understandings of Indigenous Data Governance requirements. Summit delegates asserted that in Australia, the realisation of Indigenous Data Governance:

- Adheres to the internationally agreed definitions of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance, as per the 2018 Summit (see over).
- Must be integrated at all data lifecycle stages, utilising mechanisms aligned with Indigenous-determined needs and aspirations.
- Requires Indigenous leadership and control over all Indigenous Data Governance processes.
- Requires widespread Indigenous data literacy and capability by allocating resources for Indigenous workforce expansion and investing in digital infrastructure and systems aligned with Indigenous priorities.
- Is based on ensuring accountability of entities that hold Indigenous data, ensuring that data are available to and accessible by the Indigenous Peoples and lands to which they relate.
- Requires that the creation of new data incorporate Indigenous Data Governance mechanisms, guaranteeing that data production is ethical, representative, and beneficial.

Indigenous communities maintain the right to decide which datasets require active governance and retain the right to abstain from participating in data processes inconsistent with the principles stated in this Communique.

¹ The term 'Indigenous' refers to Australia's First Peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

² Walter, M. (2018) Lovett, R., Maher, B., Williamson, B., Prehn, J., Bodkin-Andrews, G. and Lee, V., 2021. Indigenous data sovereignty in the era of big data and open data. *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 56(2), pp.143-156.

³ For more information see Kukutai, T. and Taylor, J. eds. 2016. *Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Towards an Agenda* (Vol. 38) ANU Press.

⁴ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) Articles 3, 4, 5, 15(i), 18, 19, 20(i), 23,31, 32, 33, 38, & 42.

Implementing Indigenous Data Governance requires moving well beyond participation, dissemination, and translation. Indigenous Data Governance requires equipping Indigenous leaders, practitioners, and community members with the necessary support, skills, and infrastructure to advocate and participate across all data aligned sectors and jurisdictions.

Building on the 2018 Summit Outcomes

This Communique should be read in conjunction of the key outcomes of the 2018 Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit reproduced in part below. The two Communiques address different aspects of Indigenous data rights in Australia and the outcomes of the 2023 Indigenous Data Governance Summit builds on the work and outcomes of the 2018 Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit.

Communique

Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit

20th June 2018, Canberra, ACT

The Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute convened the National Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit (the Summit) on 20th June 2018 in Canberra, ACT. Over 40 Indigenous delegates attended, including representatives from peak bodies, public servants, academics and community leaders. Delegates came from every state and territory in Australia and were joined by four representatives of Te Mana Raraunga Māori Data Sovereignty Network.

The aim of the Summit was to progress Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance through developing shared understandings and initiate an Australian set of Indigenous Data Governance protocols. Delegates attending the Summit endorsed the following foundational statements.

- That in Australia, '*Indigenous Data*' refers to information or knowledge, in any format, that is about and that may affect Indigenous peoples both collectively and individually.
- '*Indigenous Data Sovereignty*' refers to the right of Indigenous peoples to exercise ownership over Indigenous data. Ownership of data can be expressed through the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of Indigenous data.
- '*Indigenous Data Governance*' refers to the right of Indigenous peoples to decide what, how and why Indigenous data are collected. It ensures that data on or about Indigenous peoples reflects our priorities, values, cultures, worldviews and diversity.

Exercising Indigenous Data Governance equips Indigenous peoples, our representatives and governing bodies to accurately reflect our stories. It provides the necessary tools to identify what works, what does not and why. Exercising Indigenous Data Governance empowers Indigenous peoples to make the best decisions to support our peoples and communities in the ways that meet our development needs and aspirations.

The Summit delegates asserted the right to:

- Exercise Indigenous control of the data ecosystem including creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure.
- Data that are contextual and disaggregated (available and accessible at individual, community and First Nations levels).
- Data that are relevant and empowers sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance.
- Data structures that are accountable to Indigenous peoples and First Nations.
- Data that are protective and respects our individual and collective interests.

Enacting Indigenous Data Governance requires Indigenous leaders, practitioners and community members with the skills and infrastructure to advocate and participate across all sectors and jurisdictions. Indigenous communities retain the right to decide which sets of data require active governance and maintain the right to not participate in data processes inconsistent with the principles asserted in this Communique.