MMIWG2S+

URBAN
*INDIGENOUS
ACTION GROUP

URBAN CO-DEVELOPMENT
for Urban *Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People

The Urban Indigenous Action Group (UIAG) – is a group of survivors, family members, front line service providers and experts with lived experience in the urban reality and violence.

We are guided by **First Nations, Inuit and Métis ways of knowing and being in our work, and together we developed the urban chapter of the National Action Plan to Eliminate Violence Against *Indigenous Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people regardless of residency. A full definition of Urban and *Indigenous can be found in our National Action Plan page 3.

Our vision is transformative change. A world where Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are free from violence and have a bright future.

The Urban chapter sets out key principles and priorities as well as a description of the urban reality, resources to support thriving urban communities, a co-development model, restoring the role and place of 2SLGBTQQIA+ people and an definition of urban Indigenous communities.

We have developed this guide to provide ideas and resources to support your organization on the co-development path. There may be many different ways to approach co-development, and this guide provides a background with Qs & As, a checklist regarding important concepts and supportive resources such as examples of when co-development has been used successfully and tools to support decision-making.

1. BACKGROUND

What Is Co-development and Why Is It Important?

Co-development is new approach to shared decision-making. It means that the right people are at the table as equal partners when decisions are being made. In other words **"nothing about us without us."**

Urban *Indigenous and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people are often left out of decision-making and funding models. This means that *Indigenous people living in urban areas may not be able to access appropriate services, and co-development is a practical way to address these gaps in services.

When Should a Co-development Approach Be Used?

Co-development should be used to address **all matters and decisions** that affect Urban *Indigenous and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. For example, to provide solutions for violence, to address the need for housing and people who are unsheltered, to provide culturally appropriate programs and services for children and youth, and to address a full range of health needs such as mental health or substance use in urban areas.

See the attached Supportive Resources section, which contains examples of situations where co-development was used successfully.

Regarding violence, the people who understand community needs and violence prevention must be fully included as equals when discussing how to best address violence. This means that Urban *Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, including families and survivors must always be fully involved, as they know what they need to address violence in their lives and communities.

What Results Can We Expect from a Co-development Approach?

Co-development treats all participants with dignity and respect. It results in new solutions for problems and true ownership by all.

Full inclusion of urban *Indigenous communities and voices would also result in culturally appropriate programs and services that meet the needs of the community and improve living conditions for community members. This is about meeting the needs of people and providing programs and services no matter where we may live.

Here are some examples of results you can expect from a true co-development approach in urban centres:

* Recognition that urban *Indigenous communities exist

* Resources provided to create and support *Indigenous-led urban organizations

* Culturally appropriate referrals and engagements for urban *Indigenous people

* More safe spaces for urban *Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people

* Significant policy and planning shifts to honour urban expertise

* Capacity created in *Indigenous-led urban organizations

* Power sharing or transfer of authority to make decisions and control programs and projects for urban *Indigenous communities

How Can My Organization Be Involved in Co-development to Address Violence in Urban Areas?

There are many complicated causes of violence in urban areas which must be addressed. All governments must understand that partnering with urban *Indigenous people doesn't mean doing things for them, but to take guidance from and support local, Indigenous-led urban organizations.

There isn't only one way to be involved in true co-development, and what works in one place may not work in another. However, this guide cannot provide ideas and resources to support your organization on the co-development path, and provide guidance to all governments about how to properly include urban partners.

Please note that we are setting out a co-development framework, but the end result of co-development processes must be co-management, which speaks to longer term, sustained change.

Please see the attached checklist and supportive resources.

2. CO-DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

Co-development partners need to agree on some important concepts, including how to define urban and the urban reality, being inclusive and what the co-development process should include.

✔ **Urban Definition** – Co-development partners will want to be clear about who they are talking about when they are speaking about urban. The UIAG definition is: **First Nation, Inuit and Métis people living in small, medium and large communities, including rural, isolated and remote communities, which are: off-reserve; outside of their home community, community of origin or settlement; or outside of **Inuit Nunangat (**Inuit Homelands). A detailed definition is outlined in our National Action Plan page 3.

✔ **Urban Reality** – Partners must demonstrate respect and recognition of urban *Indigenous realities – there is a vital, innovative, resilient and strong urban *Indigenous presence. Urban *Indigenous communities in many places are well established, with multiple service organizations, recognized Elders, and a multigenerational society. They are distinct, diverse and inclusive cultures, and urban service providers are predominantly led and staffed by women. Ignoring urban is also about ignoring women, and if this situation continues, we will fail to find a legitimate approach to end violence against urban *Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

✔ **Being Inclusive** – Although there are major data gaps and concerns with how data is collected, what information we do have tells us that the majority of **First Nations, Inuit and Métis people live in urban and rural areas. Therefore, an equitable and non-discriminatory approach to co-development must include urban *Indigenous people and organizations sitting at the table (or tables).

Co-development partners should make a commitment to fully include survivors, families, urban *Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people as leaders in their own right. The UIAG uses and understands the terms *Indigenous and **First Nations, Inuit and Métis to always mean regardless of residency, and regardless of relationship to the Crown. Urban *Indigenous communities honour, respect and celebrate complex urban identities including such factors as sex, gender, residency, geography, ability, and age.

Urban co-development should include all relevant federal, provincial, territorial, *Indigenous and other governments, as well as other organizations, urban service providers and urban *Indigenous and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people as full partners.

✔ **What the Co-Development Process Should Include** - In the view of the UIAG, following is a list of crucially important, interrelated elements that should be agreed upon at the start of co-development processes:

- a focus on rights and responsibilities/decolonizing.

- an intersectoral approach.

- equality and respect

- shared objectives/vision

- decision making and conflict resolution

- roles and responsibilities

- accountability and transparency

- clear expectations

A full description of these elements can be found in our National Action Plan (Appendix D, Page 71). Healing is an important part of this process and must be incorporated into every element and step in the co-development process. Here is a short overview of each of these elements:

✔ **Focus on Rights and Responsibilities/Decolonizing** – parties should agree to take a rights-based approach, and focus on decolonizing, which calls for cultural safety and for processes to be built upon **First Nation, Inuit and Metis cultural values and principles. A rights-based approach must be consistent with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which affirms that "indigenous peoples, in the exercise of their rights, should be free from discrimination of any kind." Parties should also ensure that a focus on rights includes a focus on responsibilities. The terms "rights" and "responsibilities" reflect very different cultures and values, and a decolonizing approach must not only understand the different approaches, but also ensure that both are understood and reflected. We must return fundamentally to the idea of responsibility to respect each other, the earth and our cultural heritage.

✔ **Intersectoral Approach** – an intersectoral approach refers to the ways that different groups and sectors of society work together (for example, health, education, housing, and local government coming together to work on health issues).

Parties should agree on the need to call intersectoral partners to the table, particularly those with deep experience regarding violence against MMIWG and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. We must harness our strengths that we jointly bring to the table and work together in a coordinated way to address the challenges and opportunities before us. An intersectoral approach to co-development and shared decision making have proven to be the formula for success in addressing some of the biggest challenges that we face, and therefore should be seen as wise practices to be utilized elsewhere. Please see a few examples of wise practices, attached.

- **Equality and Respect** – Co-development must be based upon relationships, which take time, requiring respectful exchange and trust-building. One very important aspect of trust and respect is respect for **First Nations, Inuit and Métis expertise. Equality and respect are important starting points for relationships, and equality is not possible without ensuring equity, particularly in decision-making and financial resources. Power imbalances can be caused by lack of equality in funding and support. We must recognize that barriers and inequality exist, and measures must be undertaken to achieve equity and resources will need to be found to ensure that smaller partners can participate on a level playing field, with equal capacity, expertise, and opportunity to influence the process and outcomes.

- **Shared Objectives/Vision** - A co-development process where all participants are working together toward a common objective will support the opportunity to produce better outcomes. Such an approach should be flexible and inclusive of all viewpoints.

- **Decision Making and Conflict Resolution** – An agreement should be made that decisions are truly being made jointly, with real power-sharing. Parties must avoid a situation where one or more parties are making final decisions without the involvement or support from other partners at the table such **First Nation, Inuit and Métis partners, families, survivors and Urban *Indigenous women, girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people.

  Parties should agree on how to deal with disputes. Conflict resolution mechanisms can be formal or informal and should include: mediation that clearly supports the involvement of all parties in decision-making; and training on conflict resolution and how broader systems of power show up in interpersonal interactions.

- **Roles and Responsibilities** - Parties should ensure that roles and responsibilities are crystal clear and there is an understanding how to address different issues and interests.

- **Accountability and Transparency** - A good co-development process includes regular reviews with mutually agreed upon outcomes, measurable indicators, and public reporting and other mechanisms to hold partners accountable. Checking back with each other on a regular basis ensures ongoing engagement and commitment and reinforces trust.

  At the outset, partners must agree to be accountable to each other, and not only to their own organizations and members. Further, there should be opportunities for regular *Indigenous caucuses; and a shared accountability dashboard for the same access to key/critical information at the same time.

- **Clear Expecations about Process and Outcomes** - there must be clear expectations set at the outset by the partners, including clear and realistic timelines; adequate resources for participation; ongoing dialogue and communication; evaluation/ monitoring implementation; scope and capacity; and identification of relevant partners and stakeholders.

3. SUPPORTIVE RESOURCES

Wise Practices

✳ **Devolution of child welfare in Manitoba** gave decision-making to the families, as they are the most invested in solutions and know what will work in their own contexts. This includes Family Group Conferencing, which reduces trauma, results in fewer days of kids in care and saves money. In Nova Scotia, the family group conference model has been written into provincial Child welfare legislation

✳ **Tracia's Trust in Manitoba** (https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/traciastrust/index.html) To address the sexual exploitation of children and youth, a Common Table was created and operated from 2000 to 2014, composed of government officials, **First Nations leadership, law enforcement, community-based organizations, and other stakeholders.

In this case, four key groups created a common table, although a future table should also include the private sector as an important actor. The groups sitting at the table included:

1. The Provincial government, which demonstrated political will, and was required to make the bureaucracy sit at the table and work collaboratively;

2. *Indigenous leadership and governments;

3. Youth and women's serving organizations; and

4. Survivors

The table has to be equitable, which means one seat for each of the organizations listed above. If any of the members were missing, then meetings were rescheduled until all parties could be present. The partners sat at the table in an equitable manner enabling effective joint decision making. It is important to note that while there was a main table, tables were necessary. In this case, and in order to ensure that the critical voices of survivors were included, there was an experiential advisory committee. This Committee set the terms and met on independently to conduct its work. The main table had to make sure the experiential advisory committee was well-resourced and supported, so that they could tell the main table what was needed in terms of problem solving.

This group was successful because it worked to build the relationships necessary to create the common table and agenda, and also incorporated the important elements of co-development which speak directly to process:

• Shared objectives/vision

• Clear decision making and conflict resolution

• Clear understanding of, and agreement on respective roles and responsibilities;

• Accountability mechanisms, measures and transparency

• Clear expectations for the process and outcomes

✱ **What Does Co-Development Mean to Inuit Women?**
(https://pauktuutit.ca/abuse-prevention/gender-based-violence/nipimit-nanisiniq-finding-voice/) Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada, 2020, which noted: "There is a need to move beyond how the federal government interprets the term 'co-development' and clearly define our expectations as a full partner in the process. There must be consultation between the parties (Inuit women and the federal government) on the issues and the development and analysis of solutions a view to reaching mutually agreed to solutions."

✱ **The Urban Indigenous Action Plan in Ontario** (https://files.ontario.ca/uiap_full_report_en.pdf)
In Ontario, the model incorporates flexibility to react to new information and circumstances:

"The Urban Indigenous Action Plan includes ongoing measurement and public reporting on progress of the desired outcomes. This will build on the strengths of communities and will strive to build on the Performance Measurement Framework of Key Performance Indicators (or suitable substitute indicators). Performance measurement is a continual process that acknowledges a need for flexibility and may need a revised approach as improved data collection and its information becomes available."

The plan also set out the following principles upon which their work was based:

- Respect for Indigenous Cultures and Spiritualities

- Indigenous Leadership

- Collaboration and Co-development

- Respect for Indigenous Diversity

- Transparency and Accountability

- Responsive to community priorities

- Cross Government Coordination
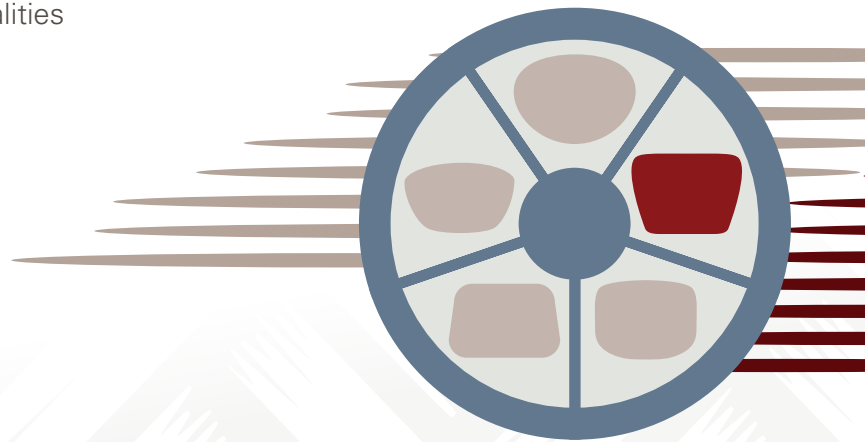
✱ **Collective Impact framework** (https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/collectiveimpact)
The Collective Impact framework is an approach to address complex issues. While it is not a perfect model, it has proven success in some places. This model refers to the need to create a backbone structure to mobilize the collective effort. "Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization and staff with a very specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative. Coordination takes time, and none of the participating organizations has any to spare. The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails." The creation of such a backbone organization or organizations to support *Indigenous organizations (separately or together) should be strongly considered as partners in co-development seek ways to level the playing field, particularly as it comes to mobilizing funding where there is a large discrepancy between parties at the table.

Incorporating Culture into Co-Development

At the core of our Urban communities is having all our needs met – including spiritual and emotional needs. We can use shared values and principles to accomplish this, in the best possible way, together.

How we enter our work incorporates **First Nations, Inuit and Métis values and ways of seeing the world, and they must be incorporated into our co-development model, as appropriate to the circumstances of the intersectoral table.

For example, as set out by Pauktuutit:

Co-development…must also be rooted in Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit

* *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq:* respecting each other, relationships and caring for people

* *Tunnganarniq:* fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming and inclusive

* *Pijitsirniq:* serving and providing for family and/or community

* *Aajiiqatigiinniq:* decision making through discussion and consensus

* *Pilimmaksarniq:* development of skill through practice, effort and action

* *Piliriqatigiinniq/Ikajuqtigiinniq:* working together for a common cause

* *Qanuqtuurniq:* being innovative and resourceful in seeking solutions

* *Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq:* respect and care for the land, animals and the environment

Another example of principles and values is set out by the seven sacred teachings - love, respect, courage, honesty, wisdom, humility and truth. These are rooted in **First Nations teachings, but they can also be seen as the gifts we bring to the table as human beings. We note that it is important to be careful about not trying to create a national cultural construct for everyone across the country. In our co-development model, we need to be careful to create a space where people can talk about the principles and values and cultural practices that are appropriate for them. For example, **Métis women have identified culture within a contemporary context as a foundation for their work, which may be different from **Inuit or **First Nation women.

Consensus Models

The principle of making decisions by consensus is very common amongst *Indigenous peoples. From a cultural perspective (or ways of knowing and being), the tradition of decision-making by consensus affirms the value of the opinions and important contributions of all. It also respects the principles of equality and the will of the people.

Therefore, decisions should ideally be made by consensus. However, at the outset of the process, we need to make sure that this term and the process is well-understood. There are a lot of necessary conditions that have to be discussed and agreed upon in advance – rules of conduct, how people listen, understanding how important it is to listen to dissent, providing adequate time for contemplation, and making a decision only after hearing all the evidence. There is a need to spend the time to get this right. For example, we often make the mistake of assuming that consensus means everyone agrees or that silence means consent. So, an agreed upon definition should note that if one person says no, it does not mean that you do not have consensus.

Consensus Continuum

There are four possible outcomes on the consensus continuum:

1. **Block:**
   If there is a fundamental disagreement amongst partners

2. **Stand-Aside:**
   Where a partner indicates that they cannot support a decision actively, but agrees to stand aside and the group can proceed

3. **Agreement:**
   Where a partner indicates that they have voiced their concern, and have heard the opposing view, and agrees to let the decision stand.

4. **Consent:**
   Full, active and enthusiastic support by all partners

Gradients of Agreement model

(https://www.lucidmeetings.com/glossary/gradients-agreement) gives people more flexibility and a nuanced approach. It is a group decision support tool [that] spells out an 8-point scale for expressing support for a decision:

1. **Whole-hearted Endorsement –** 'I really like it!'

2. **Agreement with a Minor Point of Contention –** 'Not perfect, but it's good enough.'

3. **Support with Reservations –** 'I can live with it.'

4. **Abstain –** 'This issue does not affect me.'

5. **More Discussion Needed –** 'I don't understand the issues well enough yet.'

6. **Don't Like but Will Support –** 'It's not great, but I don't want to hold up the group.'

7. **Serious Disagreement –** 'I am not on board with this - don't count on me.'

8. **Veto –** 'I block this proposal.'"

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