

Indigenous Community Circle of Empowerment

ONLINE ENCORE: ADAPTING THE IAP2 SPECTRUM

PHASE 3: GUIDEBOOK FOR PLANNING AND ENGAGEMENT PRACTITIONERS

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Introduction

Indigenous peoples had their own complex systems of governance and planning based on their way of life prior to colonization. North America’s colonial history of dispossession and settlement impacted the ability of Indigenous peoples to plan for their own communities. Mechanisms of oppression include the Indian Act, forced relocation, residential school, and the banning of traditional practices, among others.

Despite disruption and trauma, many diverse Indigenous language, governance, and planning systems are being revitalized and continue to shape decision-making and engagement today. Indigenous communities are challenging North America’s colonial past and reclaiming their enormous wealth of knowledge to achieve self-reliant communities and sovereignty.

Now more than ever, it is important that practitioners understand not only the colonial history but the way that power is being taken back and the ways that Indigenous communities are drawing on their long history of governance and planning to position themselves for new opportunities and assertion of their rights. The resiliency and strength of Indigenous Canada is to be celebrated.

The landscape of Indigenous issues has changed with a variety of events, processes, and legislation in recent years. Examples include the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) (2007), and in the Canadian Context, the National Indian Residential Schools’ Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (2008); the Tsilhqot’in decision (2014); and the conclusion of the National Inquiry into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) (2019).

These policies and decisions represent improvements in Canada’s relationship with Indigenous peoples and are important landmarks for Indigenous peoples and engagement theory and practice. However, the gap between the adoption of international and national policies and action on the ground is significant and frustrating. These initiatives all raise questions around the roles of different levels of government and planners to help advance reconciliation, UNDRIP and other calls to action on the ground and in practice.

Planning and engagement practitioners are increasingly called to engage in meaningful and sustained relationship building with Indigenous communities. Questions for practitioners might arise in terms of how this is to be achieved, measured, and sustained. Engagement practitioners might be asking:

- **What can we do to inspire an approach to engagement that is culturally appropriate, socially just, and empowering?**
- **How can we transition to an engagement culture that is more respectful and responsive?**
- **What skills, knowledge or competencies would ensure a respectful and responsive engagement culture?**
- **How should culturally appropriate engagement be measured?**

This Guidebook will address these questions with an **Indigenous Community Circle of Empowerment**. See **Figure 1** on the next page. This tool supports an appropriate application of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2) **Spectrum of Public Participation** in an Indigenous context.

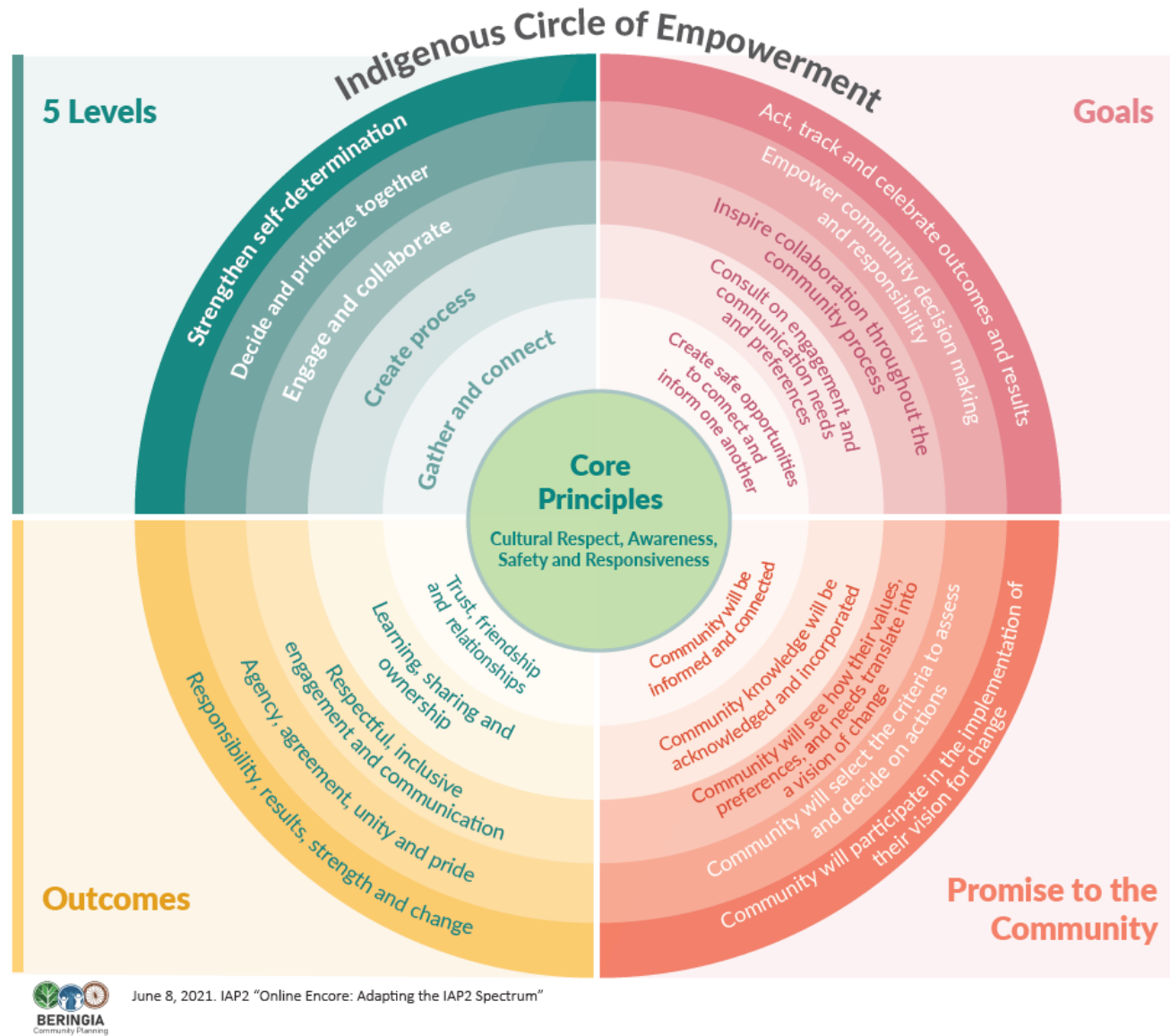


Figure 1: Indigenous Circle of Empowerment

Purpose of the Tool

The **Indigenous Community Circle of Empowerment** introduces an innovative, visual tool for practitioners to apply the IAP2 spectrum in an Indigenous cultural context. The tool offers ways that practitioners can integrate principles of mutual learning, inclusion, social justice, and empowerment in their work, and support the implementation of UNDRIP.

It is hoped that the tool will support practitioners to understand the ways in which Indigenous peoples are empowering themselves and how they can assist these efforts. This workbook outlines the skills, tools, and competencies practitioners might need to appropriately apply different levels of engagement with Indigenous communities.

The key learning objectives of this Guidebook are to:

1. Understand the ways in which practitioners can support an engagement culture that is more respectful and responsive to the needs and values of Indigenous communities
2. Be able to adapt and appropriately apply the IAP2 spectrum in Indigenous communities
3. Identify key skills, tools, and competencies that engagement practitioners need to better support different levels of engagement in Indigenous communities
4. Define how IAP2 could support engagement education and standards of practice

This tool is relevant for:

- Individuals and groups who are interested in or are already working alongside Indigenous communities and organizations, including representatives from different levels of government, non-profit and private sector professionals, community engagement practitioners, and Indigenous community planners
- Individuals wishing to learn from Indigenous community planning approaches and methods, and engage in meaningful and sustainable relationship building in an era of rights and recognition
- Practitioners who are wanting to advance their engagement practice and learn how to implement an approach that is culturally appropriate, socially just, respectful, and responsive

Important considerations:

- Planning and the concept of self-determination are different for every community
- This tool should be adapted for different language and cultural contexts
- Practitioners should work collaboratively with Indigenous communities to decide how and when to apply this tool

Orientation to the Tool

Highlights

Highlights of the Tool (**Figure 2**):

- ✓ Not a linear tool. The circle represents no end point to empowerment
- ✓ Assumes that empowerment is important at all levels of engagement
- ✓ Outlines the role of the practitioner in supporting a iterative process of self-determination
- ✓ Assumes that responsibility lies with the practitioner to facilitate a process that builds on existing community agency

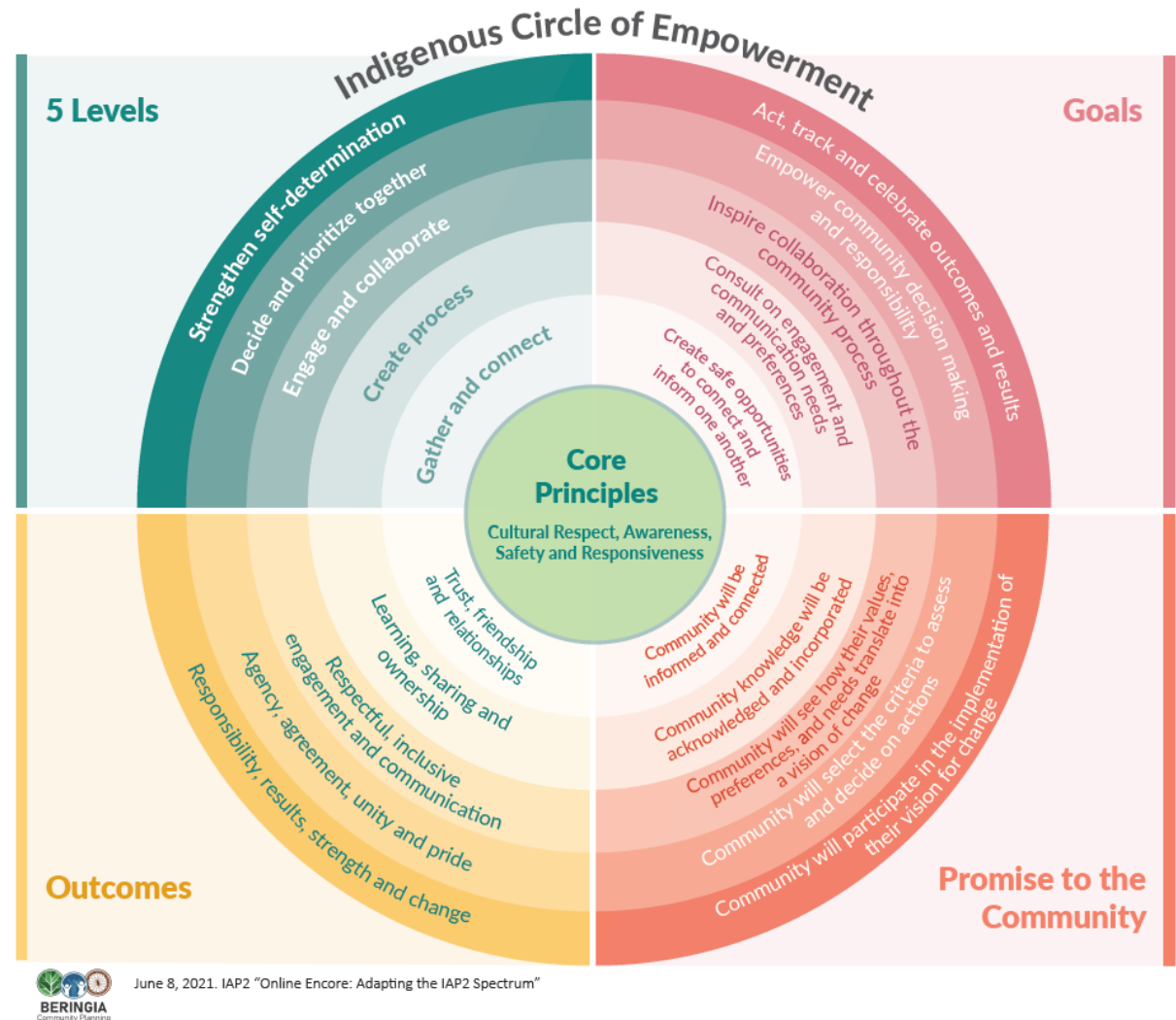


Figure 2: Indigenous Circle of Empowerment

Overview of Quadrants

The tool is comprised of four key quadrants: **Levels**, **Goals**, **Promise to the Community**, and **Outcomes**, organized by the five Levels. See overview in **Figure 3**.

The circle is designed to be read from the centre outwards, left to right or right to left depending on a community’s protocol and context.

Core Principles

Core Principles are the foundational values that should guide practitioners throughout each level of an engagement process and recognizing all four quadrants. As a practitioner, it is essential to build and demonstrate cultural awareness and responsiveness, ensure cultural safety and humility, and establish deep respect and gratitude. As a practitioner this might include learning about and being responsive to a community’s language, land, relationships, symbols, spirituality, cultural practices, history, origin stories, values and beliefs, protocols, and governance system.

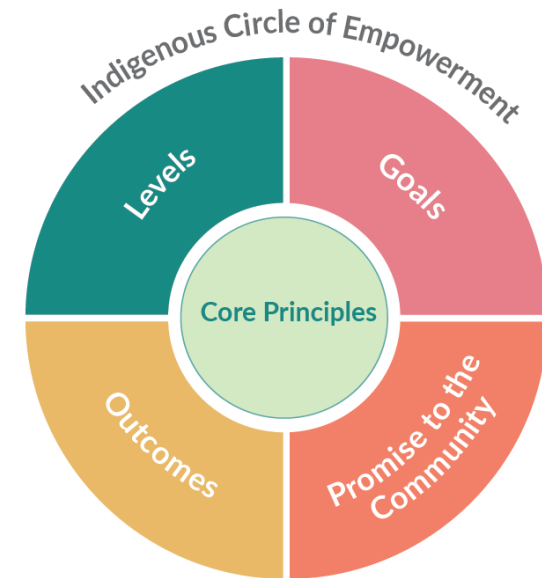


Figure 3: Overview of Indigenous Circle of Empowerment

Five Levels of Empowerment

Levels		Goals	Promise to the Community	Outcomes
The tool is comprised of five Levels that build on one another. These Levels are iterative. The first Level is foundational to the second, third, fourth, and fifth.	Strengthen self-determination	The Goal of each level describes a call to action for practitioners. The practitioner is asked to ensure that the Goal of each level is met during an engagement process, using appropriate methods, tools and techniques.	The Promise to the Community is a pledge made by the practitioner to uphold the goals and principles of the Circle throughout the community process.	The Outcomes describe the desired results the community can expect from a process that follows the Circle.
	Decide and prioritize together			
	Engage and collaborate			
	Create process			
	Gather and connect			

Overview of Levels

The tool is comprised of five Levels of Empowerment. Each Level is described in this section. The five Levels in the Circle build on one another. The Tool is iterative so the first layer (Level) of the Circle is foundational to the second, third, fourth and fifth. For example, for a process to reach **Level 5: Strengthen self-determination**, the practitioner must ensure that **Level 1: Gather and connect** took place in a good way, that the process was created by the community (**Level 2: Create process**), and that **Level 3: Engage and collaborate** and **Level 4: Decide and prioritize together** were completed.

Description of Each Level:

Level 1: Gather and Connect

The purpose of this Level is to provide community members ongoing and safe opportunities to gather, connect, and inform one another, and the practitioner. During this level, the practitioner focuses on facilitating opportunities for community members to share and communicate local knowledge and information (values and facts) and to understand the purpose and outcomes of the specific project and/ or process. Community members are active in deciding how they want to be informed and share knowledge and information. The practitioner strives to connect with as many voices as possible in the community, establish relationships, earn trust, and develop friendship. It's important to and learn about traditions, protocols, language and culture related to gathering and connecting.

Level 2: Create Process

The purpose of this Level is to work together to design, structure, deliver and adapt a community's engagement system based on their own cultural terms, conditions, values, customs, and protocols. The practitioner's role is to understand how community members want to share knowledge, input, needs, concerns, and preferences as well as be communicated with, and engaged to make decisions. The practitioner focuses on following language and cultural protocols, acknowledging strengths, addressing community concerns, and communicating knowledge and information back to community members. This Level includes highlighting how the knowledge they shared is incorporated and used to inform the project and/ or decision making process. Community members should collaboratively determine the process vision and indicators to showcase success.

Level 3: Engage and Collaborate

The purpose of this Level is to engage and collaborate with community members in a way that supports the community to articulate their strengths, concerns, priorities, and aspirations. The role of the practitioner is to ensure that community members see how their values, preferences, and needs are translated into the development of their vision for change and how these are considered in the wider project and/ or decision-making process. Community members should have meaningful roles as leaders in the process and the practitioner should prioritize opportunities for mutual learning, inclusion, and mentorship. At this point, principles of cultural safety, trust and respect should be well established. The practitioner should also support opportunities to reflect on the process and receive ongoing feedback from community members through mixed methods and tools.

Level 4: Decide and Prioritize Together

The purpose of this Level is to support community members to collaborate together to prioritize, decide, adapt and evolve their vision for change. The practitioner focuses on supporting collective decision-making processes, including working with community members to decide a set of criteria to decide a set of actions that realizes the vision for change. The practitioner may also work to facilitate collaboration across internal and external systems, in a way that supports reconciliation, healing, and community empowerment and recognition. Decision outcomes must be based on an inclusive, transparent, and clearly documented process.

Level 5: Strengthen Self-Determination

The purpose of this Level is to support community members (including families, clans, staff and leadership) to collectively decide their vision for change and commit to acting on, tracking and celebrating results as they implement actions (e.g. policies, programs, projects). The practitioner may support the community to decide an ongoing reflection and feedback cycle. At this Level in the process, the community should endorse the vision of action and feel that pride, dignity, and justice are being established. The practitioner may advocate for resources to support the community to document and implement their vision for change and action, including tracking and celebrating results on the pathway to self-determination.

Contents of Each Level and Quadrant

The contents of each layer of the four quadrants is described below.

5 Levels	Goals	Promise to the Community	Outcomes
Gather and connect	<p>Community members have safe opportunities to connect and inform one another.</p> <p>Community members are invited and have ongoing and safe opportunities to gather, connect, and inform one another, and the practitioner.</p>	<p>Community will be informed and connected.</p> <p>The practitioner focuses on facilitating opportunities for community members to share and communicate local knowledge and information and to understand the purpose and outcomes of the specific project and/ or process.</p>	<p>Trust, friendship, and relationships are established.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditions, protocols, language, and cultural practices related to gathering and connecting are honoured • Trust is earned • Relationships are established • Friendships are celebrated • Culturally appropriate tools are applied
Create process	<p>Community members are consulted on an ongoing basis on their engagement and communication needs and preferences.</p> <p>The practitioner works with community members to design, structure, deliver, and adapt a community’s engagement system based on their own cultural terms, conditions, values, customs, and protocols. The practitioner focuses on understanding how community members want to share knowledge, input, needs, concerns, and preferences, as well as be communicated with, and engaged to make decisions.</p>	<p>Community knowledge will be acknowledged and incorporated.</p> <p>The practitioner focuses on following language and cultural protocols, acknowledging strengths, addressing community concerns, communicating knowledge and information back to community members. Community members should understand how the knowledge they shared is incorporated and used to inform the project and/ or decision-making process.</p>	<p>Learning, sharing, and ownership are secured.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural rhythms are honoured • Diverse input is received • Protocols are followed • Diversity is acknowledged • Concerns are addressed • Knowledge keepers are included

5 Levels	Goals	Promise to the Community	Outcomes
Engage and collaborate	<p>Community members feel inspired to collaborate throughout the community process.</p> <p>Community members are empowered throughout the community process by informing, analyzing, and deciding collectively on their vision for change based on their own cultural terms, conditions, customs, and protocols. The community is supported to articulate their strengths, concerns, priorities, and aspirations. Community members have meaningful roles and leaders in the process, with opportunities for mutual learning, inclusion, and mentorship.</p>	<p>Community will see how their values, preferences and needs are translate into a vision of change.</p> <p>The practitioner focuses on ensuring that community members see how their values, preferences, and needs are translated into their vision for change, and how these are considered in the wider project and/ or decision-making process. The practitioner should also provide opportunities for ongoing feedback.</p>	<p>Respectful, inclusive engagement and communication are sustained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengths are acknowledged • Capacity and skills are developed • Equity and equality of representation • Collaboration takes place across families, processes, systems, and departments, etc. • Cultural safety, trust and respect are established • Ongoing opportunities for community members to provide feedback to the practitioner are provided • Mixed methods and tools are used
Decide and prioritize together	<p>Community is empowered through decision making and responsibility.</p> <p>Community members are provided opportunities to collaborate together to prioritize, decide, adapt and evolve their vision for change. The practitioner may facilitate collaboration across internal and external systems in a way that supports reconciliation, healing, and community empowerment and recognition.</p>	<p>Community will select the criteria to assess and decide on actions. The practitioner focuses on supporting collective decision-making processes, including working with community members to decide a set of criteria to decide a set of actions that realizes the vision for change.</p>	<p>Agency, agreement, unity, and pride are realized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collective results and decisions are validated • Healing is supported • Ongoing adaptation and evolution • Accessible communication and documentation • Decision transparency • Process of deciding outcomes is transparent and well documented

5 Levels	Goals	Promise to the Community	Outcomes
Strengthen self-determination	<p>Community collectively acts on, tracks, and celebrates the outcomes and results of change and action.</p> <p>Community members are supported to collectively decide their vision for change and commit to acting on, tracking and celebrating results as they implement their actions (e.g. policies, programs, projects). The practitioner may support the community to decide on an ongoing reflection and feedback cycle.</p>	<p>Community will participate in the implementation of their vision for change.</p> <p>The community should collectively endorse and participate in the implementation of their vision for change and set of actions, including results tracking, documenting, and celebrating. The practitioner might also advocate for resources to support the community to document and implement their vision for change and action.</p>	<p>Responsibility, results, strength, and change are realized.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pride is instilled • Justice is established • Decision-making outcomes are owned • Strength is acknowledged • Success is recognized and celebrated • Legitimacy and transparency are increased • Equity and equality are strengthened



Methods, Tools and Techniques

The following example methods tools and techniques can support practitioners to achieve their promises to the community.

Level	Gather and Connect	Create Process	Engage and Collaborate	Decide and Prioritize Together	Strengthen Self-Determination
Promise	Community will be informed and connected	Community knowledge will be acknowledged and incorporated	Community will see how their values, preferences and needs translate into a vision for change	Community will select the criteria to assess and decide on actions	Community will participate in the implementation of their vision for change
Methods, Tools and Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community mandate & resolution Conversations, asking questions Local planning / cultural committee Recognition ceremony Traditional laws Data governance protocol Social, cultural & kinship map Games, fun, celebration Drumming, songs, story telling, ceremonies Invitation to gather (e.g. feasting, gatherings) Tools to learn and acknowledge (e.g. historical timeline) Use of tools (e.g. media, open house, bulletin, meetings, video, face-to-face, storytelling, photos, newsletter, social media) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open, structured dialogue and two-way dialogue (e.g. focus groups, storytelling, World Café, Carousel Planning, fireside chats) Appreciative Inquiry Engagement preferences (e.g. survey, co-created strategy) Demographic analysis Collaborative practice charter Cultural process diagram Cultural safety protocol Talking guidelines Dignity informed approach Language translation Incentives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community research / Planning protocol Engagement and communications plan Cultural planning framework Community profile Strengths summary Situational assessment Cultural timeline Historical timeline Participation incentives Accomplishments poster Photo journal Participatory mapping Art contests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visual, video and audio tools for options analysis Decision criteria tool Pros and cons analysis Ranking tools Talking circles Relationship maps Tradeoff analysis Cost benefit analysis Monitoring & evaluation strategy Multiple Communication tools (e.g. video, brochure, newsletters, face to face promotion). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan ambassador Implementation Committee Training plan Mentorship & coaching Ceremony of accomplishments Recognition & gifts ceremony Feasting Process for reflection and revision Storytelling