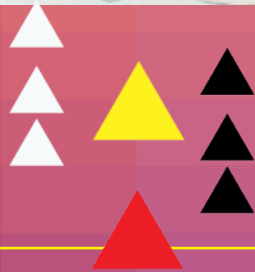




Universal Language  
by Colleen Gray



**WÌDJÌWÀGAN**

SUPPORTING  
INDIGENOUS  
INNOVATORS

# GETTING STARTED

Indigenous people are a rich source of great ideas, creativity, ingenuity and have a need for resources for social innovation. Urban and rural Indigenous communities are ripe with the most crucial elements to spark impactful innovation. What is lacking is access – access to capital, to markets, to networks, to learning and capacity building – which is crucial to building a social purpose organization. This is something the Canadian Social Innovation ecosystem can offer.

We will only have equity when Indigenous Innovators have the same access, the same opportunities, and the ability to seize them as all other social innovators in Canada do. Providing resources to Indigenous individuals, communities, and organizations is all of our responsibility.

You can start here – today and now – by informing yourself more about Indigenous Innovation and how you can support it, whatever your role may be.



## Promoting an Inclusive Social Innovation Ecosystem

Inclusion begins with presence. The Social Innovation ecosystem must come together to ensure the inclusion of Indigenous peoples if Canada is to excel in social innovation and see the benefits of its investment in the Social Finance Fund. For inclusion, equity and progress, Indigenous individuals must play a substantial role within all areas of the ecosystem. Non-Indigenous partners must learn not only how to include Indigenous people but how to cultivate reciprocal relationships and mutual respect.

## Building a Self-Reflective Practice

Building a self-reflective practice is key for social innovation practitioners in ensuring that social impact is embedded in both their outputs and processes. Self-reflection comes with consistent intentional work on the part of the individual. It enables deeper learning, astute observations, and grows compassion and empathy towards a diversity of experiences.



**Your practice may take on many different forms, but as a starting point, we have identified important questions for you to consult with yourself on a regular basis. Make self-reflection a part of your every day.**



## ACTIVITY

Consider cutting out these blocks and posting them somewhere where you will see them every day, like your office space.

**Whose voices are included in what I've learned? Whose voices are missing and needed before I can act?**

**Have I appropriately included Indigenous voices in the planning or early stages of our work? In the delivery? In the evaluation?**

**Do I have the Indigenous cultural competence needed to make the decisions before me?**

**How can I communicate with Indigenous people to serve them better?**





## Traditional knowledge

Including Traditional Knowledge in social innovation is important to Indigenous entrepreneurs, and practitioners who wish to support them must know how to approach Traditional Knowledge with care and respect.

Traditional Knowledge is often sacred and therefore not always meant to be shared. Traditional Knowledge is also not eligible for copyrights, patents, or other forms of legal protection as it is not owned by any individual person or persons. For these reasons, while a knowledge exchange and an appreciation of Traditional Knowledge are needed for understanding and inclusion within the Social Innovation ecosystem, it needs to be granted on the basis of a desire for inclusion, reconciliation, and good faith without full knowledge of it.



## ACTIVITY

When beginning a new project with an Indigenous partner that draws on Traditional Knowledge consider reflecting on your role in the partnership.

- **Is the knowledge being shared with me being shared freely?**
- **When discussing Traditional Knowledge am I approaching it openly or with Western perspectives and expectations?**
- **How can I cultivate more openness to new ways of knowing and understanding?**
- **Who is leading the project? What is needed to build a more reciprocal relationship?**

