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# Indigenous Governance Programming in Academia: Reflections on Community-responsive Philosophy & Practice

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## Abstract

*The Indigenous Governance and Partnership (IGP) Program is a uniquely positioned research and teaching unit that is situated in the only Indigenous Studies faculty in North America. This article describes the philosophy, principles, pedagogy, and practices of the IGP Program, its fourteen-year history, and its most recent contributions in the subject area of Indigenous governance. The IGP governance framework and the IGP research method emerge from community-responsive research and custom programming partnerships. These models and related learnings are introduced to provide academics with a set of tools with which to teach Indigenous governance, establish community-based research partnerships that are enduring and respectful, and provide holistic and transformational public education to a myriad of organizations and change-oriented leaders.*

## Background

This article describes the principles and philosophy of the Indigenous Governance and Partnership (IGP) Program, its history since 2007, and its most recent contributions in the subject area of Indigenous governance. The IGP Program is a uniquely positioned research and teaching unit that is situated in the Faculty of Native Studies, the only Indigenous Studies faculty in North America, at the University of Alberta, located on traditional Treaty 6 First Nations' territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation.

The following article is organized into five main sections. The first section introduces the foundational principles and philosophies that shape the theoretical and applied areas of the IGP Program. This section includes a summary of the key scholarship and contributions in the field that have been formative to the creation of the IGP Program and its trajectory. The second section describes the IGP framework and how this model has shaped teaching and research in the IGP Program. The third section dives deeper into the background consultations that were influential in establishing the Program, the pedagogy employed, and the avenues where teaching takes place, including the Certificate in Indigenous Governance and Partnership and outreach education. The fourth section

provides an overview of a major community-led research project that was undertaken with the Métis Nation of Alberta (MNA) in 2016, which was instrumental to the formation of the IGP research method. The IGP research method is one example of how a community-led research processes can be approached. The final section summarizes how to maintain good partnerships and future directions for the program. Much important and robust theoretical work has been done in the field of Indigenous governance. This article is different in that it fills a gap in discussions on program building. This article is not a state-of-the-field paper on the important arguments, debates, and theoretical interventions in Indigenous governance<sup>1</sup> but, rather, a reflection on fourteen years of programming and the interplay between program development, pedagogy, and community-engaged research.

We begin with a brief introduction of the co-authors and program faculty members. Reflecting the work itself, this article has been co-written as a partnership between the three authors involved with the IGP Program. This reflection and writing process is yet another iteration of the ways we practice governance in all aspects of our everyday lives. This process also demonstrates the importance of partnership in knowledge co-creation, as well as knowledge exchange – within programs and faculties, between colleagues, between mentors/teachers and students, both inside and outside-on-the-land classrooms, between policy writers and decision makers in government and corporate meeting rooms, and between friends and family around the kitchen table in our homes. This article is a fourteen-year snapshot of governance decision-making and partnership-building practices that have culminated, through extensive community-engaged research, teaching, and training endeavours, in two applicable governance and partnership models.

As we write this article in partnership, we are also informed by our positionalities and our time involved with the program and working with each other. As the founding and current Director of the IGP Program, Dr. Shalene Jobin is intimately involved with both the strategic overview and the day-to-day operations. She was integral in the inception of the program in 2007. Over the past fourteen years, Jobin has also completed her PhD, created and taught numerous courses at the Faculty of Native Studies, mentored and supervised undergraduate and graduate students, and has supported many communities: the academy, urban Indigenous governance projects, and Indigenous nation's governance initiatives. Jobin is the Co-Founder of the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge and currently holds a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Governance. Shalene is a citizen of Red Pheasant Cree First Nation, through her maternal line (Wuttunee family) and is Métis through her paternal line (Jobin family).

Avery Letendre was the Administrator of the IGP Program from 2018–2021. Letendre started with the program in 2016 as a Research Assistant and completed an MA in Indigenous Studies in 2018. Reconciliation in Solidarity Edmonton (RISE) supported participant recruitment for Letendre's thesis and she continues to support the work of RISE. Letendre is a Euro-Canadian settler, and Letendre's husband is an MNA citizen.

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<sup>1</sup> For a literature review on the field of Indigenous governance, see “Indigenous Studies: Determining Itself” (Jobin 2016).



and they continue to have complex systems of governance today (Jobin 2013; Ladner 2005). *wichetowin* ᐃᑦᑎᐃᐃᑦ is a Cree concept that means “having a partnership.” When Treaty 6 was negotiated, a medallion was gifted to Chiefs to acknowledge this partnership. For many Indigenous leaders at the time, this *wichetowin* ᐃᑦᑎᐃᐃᑦ was bringing the European settlers into *wahkohtowin* ᐱᑦᑎᐃᐃᑦ. That was the vision, but settler fear<sup>2</sup> has diminished the potential for *mîyo-wichetowin* ᑎᑦᑦᑎᐃᐃᑦ (good partnerships or living in harmony together). How do we move towards these original teachings? Community-engaged teaching and research can be part of the pathways forward.



Figure 1: Indigenous Governance and Partnership Program, Principles of Engagement

The IGP Program was created in consultation with Indigenous communities and leaders to facilitate this pathway forward. To do so, the values of good relationships and partnership are embedded into the work because, at a fundamental level, Indigenous governance education is about moving toward and upholding *mîyo-pimâtisiwin*, a Cree term for “living the good life.” Indigenous governance programming involves instruction and training on how *mîyo-pimâtisiwin* takes shape through critical care networks between humans and non-humans, within Indigenous communities, and in relationship with settler society. The various areas of governance will be discussed further in this article, but an integral aspect of the work is the modelling and embedding of these original teachings – good relationships and partnership – by the IGP team of scholars, students, and administrators.

<sup>2</sup> Letendre (2018) states, “many settlers do not know how to live outside of dominant, certain and superior frames of mind and this results in poor community and connection. Fear and insecurity are contributing factors to the settler lack of connection” (105).

Indigenous governance and partnership programming is a cyclical process of knowing, doing and being. Indigenous governance knowledges are located through language and are imparted through everyday stories and scholarship that provide ethical frameworks, laws, and instruction on living protocols, processes, and practices for living the good life. Language connects to the land from which it is derived (Ghostkeeper 2019) and reminds us not only of the actions we need to ensure our survival but also of the practices of making place home (Kimmerer 2013). The actions and behaviours that come about through the instructions and ethics found in Indigenous languages and stories become emotional embodied core intelligence. Thus, the language becomes the knowledge system of the people (Ghostkeeper 2019). As such, the teachings and ways of doing become engrained and are inseparable from who Indigenous peoples are. The teachings and ways of doing are rooted in place; for the IGP Program, the programming is drawn from prairie Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, stories, and languages. The IGP Program endeavours to bring the wisdom of these knowledge systems and embodied core intelligence to diverse students and stakeholders in order to move the original teachings of *wahkohtowin*, *mîyo-wichetowin* and *mîyo-pimâtisiwin* forward.

Governance is a complex concept that encompasses numerous corresponding concepts. Indigenous governance happens around us every day; it happens around kitchen tables, in extended families, in organizations, in governments, and in nation-to-nation relations (Jobin Lindquist, and Letendre 2017; Ladner 2010). Indigenous nations thrived in complex systems of governance before Canada became a country, systems that remain in place even in the face of Canadian attempts to diminish them (Jobin 2013; Ladner 2005). We are now at an interesting moment, globally. Many state and policy actors are relying on international legal instruments like the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) and the findings of national commissions such as the *Calls to Action* of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) National Inquiry's *Calls for Justice* to grapple with historical (and ongoing) injustices and renew their relationships with Indigenous peoples. The UNDRIP, perhaps the most venerable of international legal-political instruments, includes important affirmations on governance, including the right to self-determination (Article 3) and the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to internal and local affairs (Article 4). It also states that Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen our distinct political, legal, economic, social, and cultural institutions (Article 5).

The last twenty-five years of scholarship on Indigenous governance and self-determination have tended to emphasize models and principles of good governance (Borrows 2010; Corntassel 2012; Jobin 2013; Jobin 2016; Jobin and Kappo 2017; Kuokkanen 2011). For example, the Banff Centre's Indigenous Leadership and Management Development program developed a Wise Practices model with seven key success factors that emphasize the importance of locally situated identities and cultures (Wesley-Esquimaux and Calliou 2010, 19–22). The Centre for First Nations Governance (CFNG) similarly emphasizes five pillars of effective governance that blend the traditional values of Indigenous peoples

and modern realities of self-governance; each pillar of effective governance has a series of principles embedded within it (2013). The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, and now the Native Nations Institute, approach Native nation rebuilding through five key principles (Cornell and Kalt 2006). Through this article, we explore other key societal elements that also need inclusion. In addition, while such well-established governance *models* have offered key insights, little analytical attention has been paid to their attendant Indigenous governance research *methods*. In developing the governance program, we have focused on both governance models and methods. Through the programming, we have found an important connection between governance and partnership, in both theory and application. We will discuss how this relationship is reflected in the IGP framework and method through a research project case study.

### **Indigenous Governance and Partnership Framework**

We will discuss the IGP framework and how it was established through the research project with the MNA. Later in the research section of the article, we will introduce the IGP method and discuss how it was applied to a community-based research project undertaken in response to an Indigenous nation's expressed goals and needs in Alberta.

In 2016, the IGP Program embarked upon a research project with the MNA to provide analysis about their governance structure and systems in order to develop a new governance framework model (Jobin, Lindquist, and Letendre 2017) for their nation. In doing so, the IGP Program developed a theoretical framework (see Figure 2) that builds upon the Indigenous governance models discussed above. This framework developed through an analysis of what citizens of their nation said were important when considering renewing their governance system. The following key elements are seen as important to explicitly include when exploring large governance questions of need to an Indigenous nation: (1) identity, culture, and belonging; (2) historic and intergenerational perspectives; (3) diplomacy; (4) land and livelihood; (5) leadership; (6) legitimacy and voice; (7) legal orders; and (8) political and public service.

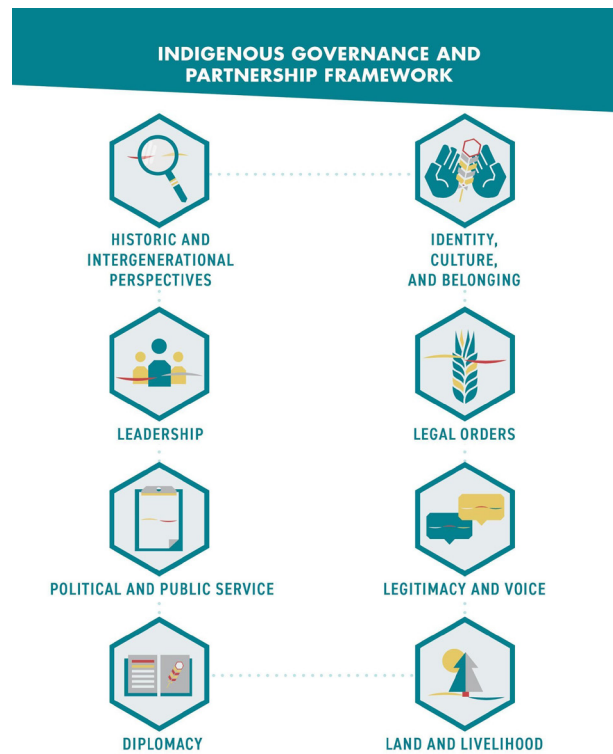


Figure 2: Indigenous Governance and Partnership Framework

In terms of research, the IGP Framework is twofold

(1) a structure to understand, administer, and implement the foundational values, vision, rights, and responsibilities” of an Indigenous nation; “and (2) a mechanism to organize and address governance recommendations, that in turn inform and shape the framework needed to rebuild their respective nation. This approach provides flexibility to adjust strategies in response to both internal and external feedback and entrenches modes of transparency and rigour in pursuit of the desired outcomes. (Jobin, Lindquist, and Letendre 2017).

Each of these governance areas is described below. These are described in the same plain-language way we use in reporting back to communities. We have also found that each of these topics requires an intersectional analysis, including a gender analysis (see “Future Directions and Reflections” section).

### *Historic and Intergenerational Perspectives*

Historic and intergenerational perspectives include histories, stories, activism, and human and non-human relationships, such as those to the place and specific lands of the Indige-



nous nation. This area of governance includes how members connect intergenerationally; involve, support, and prioritize Elders and youth; and come to decisions for the nation's greater good and sustainability. Structurally, it includes mechanisms that are used in the nation's social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions.

### *Identity, Culture, and Belonging*

Identity, culture, and belonging shape and are shaped by an Indigenous nation's citizenship (guidelines and requirements) and connections that are held in the community. The nation's policies, bylaws, laws, events and gatherings – formal and informal community life (such as visiting) – influence citizens' knowledges of and connection to the nation and its culture. The relationship between individual and collective identity is shaped by kinship relations and interactions with other Indigenous communities. The legal orders governing area explore how Canadian laws have influence in this area. For strong identity, culture, and belonging, citizens require regular, ongoing opportunities to engage with and give back to their community in multiple ways.

### *Leadership*

The leadership governing area shapes the experiences communities have and the direction the nation will take. Leadership includes informal leadership and, as such, encourages the nation's people to take the initiative with their gifts and skill sets to contribute in various areas for the benefit of the community (politically, economically, socially, and culturally). Formal leaders, such as an elected leadership, require well-developed guidelines and policies that create standards for accountability, transparency, and strong and enduring leadership capacity. Having strong formal leadership and stability in the community also requires paying attention to training, mentorship, and succession planning for politicians, board members, and their public service.

### *Legal Orders*

The legal orders governing area involves Indigenous laws and legal systems: Indigenous legal orders, the Canadian provincial and federal law, and nation-specific court cases. Indigenous nations are involved in their own law-making and are taking back jurisdiction in numerous societal areas, including child welfare and education. Nation building can mean acts of refusal and challenging and/or adapting the Canadian system. This reshaping can be in alignment with Canadian provincial and federal legislation, Section 35 of the Canadian Constitution, it can also include advocacy for the implementation of international and national documents like the UNDRIP and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action*, and/or it can be working within a nation's own practices and governance systems. Nation building may include work to outline, codify, communicate, and apply Indigenous nations' legal systems.

### *Political and Public Service*

The political and public service governing area encompasses the scope, deliverables, and standards for the nation's public service and affiliate organizations. This includes its transparency, means for accountability, and methods of being inclusive in political decision making. This area requires structures and mechanisms to ensure that the political service is capable and legitimate in order to realize administrative efficiencies and effectiveness in defining policies and delivering community programming. In this governance area, it is important to consider socio-economic programs that are culturally relevant to the Indigenous nation being served. Finally, a separation of powers between the political and the administrative bodies will contribute to the effectiveness of the political and public service.

### *Legitimacy and Voice*

The legitimacy and voice governing area upholds that the Indigenous nation is, and will continue to be, the legitimate decision-making institution on behalf of its citizens. Processes that ensure there is a consistent and reciprocal flow of communication, citizen participation and feedback, and consensus/mediation between levels of governance and citizens is important in this governing area, as described by the Institute on Governance (2005). Additionally, the methods of communication need to adapt to maintain connection and engagement with citizens in a variety of situations and to respond to intergenerational changes. An important element for legitimacy and voice is providing ample opportunities for oppositional feedback and creating mechanisms for responding to citizens about their needs, concerns, and suggestions.

### *Diplomacy*

The diplomacy governing area protects and builds good relationships with various governing bodies and organizations external to the Indigenous nation. This can involve the development of consensual agreements (e.g. treaties, accords, MOUs, partnership agreements) between Indigenous governments and governing bodies and relationships with Canadian municipal, provincial, and national governments. National commissions and international declarations such as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action* and the UNDRIP impact approaches for reconciliation that Indigenous nations and their partners will take. This area requires structures and processes governing negotiations and dispute resolution with nations and organizations in a diplomatic way. Diplomacy also incorporates strategies and approaches for how to have "good relations."

### *Land and Livelihood*

The land and livelihood governing area is specific to the Indigenous nation's land, its sustainability, and the maintenance of a strong relationship to place. This includes the access each nation will have to lands, resources, and economic reconciliation. Land and livelihood are joined to explore the inextricable link between the importance of upholding a nation's

relationships with the land and all beings on it (e.g. animals, water, trees) with questions of being able to provide good livelihoods for nation citizens and families. The tensions in this area are complex and may often appear contradictory. Indigenous knowledges and languages provide important systems of understanding that can be of assistance.<sup>3</sup> The land and livelihood governing area may involve comprehensive land claims and reconciliation work with Canadian levels of government to remediate economic losses. For some nations, this may include business partnerships and trade and/or the encouragement of citizen entrepreneurship and economic diversification. Strategic planning is a key element of land and livelihood, used to look forward, establish, and protect future sources of livelihood for the nation and plan for the sustenance of the community in a way that considers the health and wellbeing of the land and all living beings that reside with it.

### *Framework Discussion*

While many rich governance models are available to draw from, the IGP Framework expands upon a number of elements. For example, land and livelihood are explicitly connected together to show the inextricable link between the relationship to land and the importance of livelihood. The IGP Framework provides recognition for the ways individual citizens and the elected or positional leaders in a community play a role in contributing to the self-determination of a nation. To illustrate, when considering “identity, culture, and belonging,” a self-governing nation can facilitate and shape these categories through citizenship laws and policies that embed culture and ensure its continuity; this can be done using their own language. In tandem, self-determining acts taken up by the general citizenry, individually or collectively, can be integral to the continuity of “sustainable self-determination” (Corntassel 2008), and can be seen as acts of leadership. By example, individual and collective self-determination can be seen through the continuation of learning and practicing Indigenous languages and ceremonies, and through telling stories or maintaining traditional practices like gathering medicine and berry picking (Corntassel 2012, 89; Corntassel 2008, 118). Embedding interconnectedness into the framework is consistent with Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, where interconnectedness and the relationships among all aspects are a critical component. As introduced above in the “Principles and Philosophies” section, concepts embedded in Indigenous languages were important in the creation of the IGP program, but this also illustrates how there are contextual specificities that contributed to the creation of this framework and the IGP program that may not be suitable to all Indigenous nations, organizations, or programs. The Ban Centre’s “wise practices” concept illustrates this important distinction. Instead of “best practice,” which can be understood as replicable, wise practices provide lessons to draw from but are always contextually specific (Calliou and Wesley-Esquimaux 2015, 41–5).

In conclusion, the IGP Framework has been instrumental in guiding curriculum and research at the Faculty of Native Studies. As such, the IGP Framework is used to

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<sup>3</sup> For example, the Cree concept of *pimâchisowin* is described as making one’s own living and includes at least nine related concepts describing principles or codes of conduct (Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000, 45).

teach students about Indigenous governance, to assist communities in conceptualizing governance in a tangible way, and to address governance issues across a range of areas. This section has introduced the IGP Framework at a snapshot in time, while acknowledging that the interplay between teaching and research is ongoing, and the learnings are not fixed or static. We would expect future learnings from additional community-engaged research and the co-constitution of knowledge with students and, more broadly, in the academy. While outside the scope of this article, several debates and constraints bear down on Indigenous governance and require negotiation in the Canadian settler-colonial context. After the IGP framework is introduced into the literature, future analytical and comparative work will be able to address these topics. Moreover, while numerous articles speak to the important debates in the field, there is a gap in the literature regarding program development in Indigenous studies and in the field of Indigenous governance. Writing a focused article on program development was intended to fill this gap. In the next section, we focus on the curriculum and pedagogical aspects of the IGP program with a discussion on the Certificate in Indigenous Governance and Partnership and outreach education custom programming.

### **IGP Curriculum and Pedagogy**

A primary component of the IGP Program is providing students with specialized knowledge about Indigenous governance principles by offering undergraduate and stand-alone certificate programming in Indigenous governance and partnership. The IGP Program teaches Indigenous governance theory, introduces students to key topics in the field, and builds skills by connecting students to applied projects that are identified by and completed with Indigenous communities and organizations (see Figure 3). The Certificate in Indigenous Governance and Partnership was the first component of the IGP program. This was developed after an environmental scan was conducted to review programming and scholarship in the area of Indigenous governance and after consultation with Indigenous nations and leaders was completed in 2006. This feasibility and consultation process was led by Professor Emeritus and Founding Director of the School of Native Studies, Richard Price, and former Native Studies Dean, Ellen Bielawski. The Faculty of Native Studies engaged in a series of thirty meetings, mostly with Indigenous nation representatives from Treaty 6, 7 and 8, the Metis Settlements General Council, and the MNA, as well as with academics and administrators, governmental representatives, and business (Price 2006). There was widespread support from Indigenous leaders, such as Dr. Wilton Littlechild, Truth and Reconciliation Commissioner, who said “I extend my sincere congratulations to the Faculty of Native Studies for moving forward with these important projects. I look forward to continuing to see the University of Alberta break new grounds in meeting the needs of our Indigenous Peoples and First Nation communities” (March 17, 2008 letter of support; Price 2008). The feasibility and consultation process were instrumental in shaping the IGP Program’s curriculum, pedagogy, overall philosophy, and strategic direction. This section will discuss the teaching approach the IGP Program takes to train students to work effectively within the various areas of Indigenous governance today.



Figure 3: Indigenous Governance and Partnership Program, Key Aspects of Curriculum

When the Certificate of Indigenous Governance and Partnership (CIGP) was created, four main criteria were established for the courses and the program as a whole. These include the theoretical grounding necessary to survey political relationships in what is now called “Canada,” drawing on Indigenous perspectives to re-examine political history and exploring early contact diplomacy, treaty-making, and the subsequent colonial relations that structure the contemporary situation. Another criterion is the importance of delving into key theoretical conceptions in nationhood, critical Indigenous studies, Indigenous resurgence, Indigenous law, Indigenous feminisms, public movement building, and relationality. Another important aspect of the program is equipping students with relevant skills development to enable them to work in and with Indigenous nations today. The emphasis on partnership and real-world application came from the initial consultation process, when Indigenous community leaders and key supporters of the program indicated that there should be a focus on facilitating students’ application of the learning through real life case studies, practical skills, team-based assignments, organizational placements, and leadership training (Price 2006). One important aspect of this is teaching governance methods relevant to organizational planning, conflict resolution, and board governance.

Another core course focuses on building governance techniques that include interest-based negotiations, meeting facilitation, and building public narrative. Another core course explores the economies of Indigenous communities, including different approaches to the identification, planning, and implementation of economic strategies for Indigenous communities. In each course, key governance topics are presented and worked through in an application format where appropriate. The Capstone course synthesizes and integrates the range of knowledge and analysis from previous Indigenous governance courses and includes a practical component to enhance the interplay of the theory and practice of governance. In this course, students partner with an Indigenous nation or Indigenous organization to provide a governance project based on the nation's or organization's needs. Since 2008, we have partnered with over forty Indigenous nations and organizations to respond to community-identified research needs.

A co-constitutive process is ongoing between the research arm of the IGP program and curriculum that is not linear or static, where the research learnings are reflected in the teaching programming and the education learnings inform our research. As described above, the CIGP was initially developed from a comprehensive consultation process including guidance from First Nations and Métis leaders locally and provincially. When the IGP Framework (see Figure 2) was developed from an Indigenous nation community-led research project (2016), a subsequent program and curriculum review process led to an update of the Certificate curriculum, where our courses now correspond to the different elements of the framework (see Figure 4) with course content also being refined under the leadership from the core faculty instructors.<sup>4</sup> This co-constitutive process and interplay between university-for credit programming, research, and outreach education is a strength of this approach. It is also not static, as the learnings and reflections continue. The total number of courses in the Certificate program is six,<sup>5</sup> when students are also in a degree program.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Some of the course content fit within more than one area of the IGP Framework.

<sup>5</sup> NS 200 is a prerequisite course for students not in a native studies degree. For native studies students, the pre-requisite courses (NS 110 and NS 111) are already part of their degree program.

<sup>6</sup> The CIGP is also offered as a standalone program for students not in a degree program.

<b>Certificate Program in Indigenous Governance and Partnership</b>	
<b>Historic and Intergenerational Perspectives</b>	NS 110: Historical Perspectives in Native Studies NS 111: Contemporary Perspectives in Native Studies NS 200: Indigenous   Canada: Looking Forward/Looking Back
<b>Legal Orders</b>	NS 240: Introduction to Indigenous Legal Issues NS 340: Indigenous Legal Systems
<b>Identity, Culture, and Belonging</b>	NS 362: Indigenous Women NS 370: The Métis: The Emergence of a People NS 485: Urban Indigenous Issues and Identities
<b>Legitimacy and Voice</b>	NS 345: Governance in Indigenous Nations
<b>Political and Public Service</b>	NS 320: Indigenous Politics and Diplomacy NS 372: Métis Politics POL S 329: Global Indigenous Politics POL S 436: Topics in Indigenous Politics
<b>Leadership</b>	NS 430: Indigenous Governance and Partnership Capstone NS 445: Community Development Processes
<b>Land and Livelihood</b>	NS 330: Indigenous Economic Development NS 435: Management of Indigenous Natural Resources NS 403: Selected Topics: wahkohtowin project intensive
<b>Diplomacy</b>	NS 420: Partnership Strategies NS 440: Indigenous Treaties and Agreements

Figure 4: IGP Framework and Certificate in Indigenous Governance and Partnership classes

NS 320 and NS 430 are required core courses; students may also take two of three core electives from NS 330, NS 345, and NS 420. Students may take two further electives from the list above (see Figure 4). Descriptions of the core classes are given below, demonstrating the range of the theoretical and conceptual topics, ideas, and debates covered:

**NS 320 Indigenous Politics and Diplomacy** - Surveying political relationships in what is now called Canada, this course analyzes the long-standing tensions

in relations between Canada and Indigenous peoples. Drawing on Indigenous perspectives, this course reexamines political history, exploring early-contact diplomacy, treaty-making, and the subsequent colonial relations that structure the contemporary situation.

**NS 330 Indigenous Economies** - This course will review underlying factors which affect the economies of Indigenous communities and examine different approaches to Indigenous economies, including community, alternative, corporate and entrepreneurial business approaches. Indigenous perspectives to Indigenous Economic Development will be a principal theme.

**NS 345 Governance in Indigenous Nations** - The course will cover important conceptual paradigms in Indigenous Studies related to the governance of Indigenous nations. These include nationhood, critical Indigenous studies, Indigenous resurgence, Indigenous law, Indigenous feminism(s) and relationality. In addition, the course will cover a selection of mainstream governance methods relevant to organizational planning, conflict resolution, and board governance.

**NS 420 Partnership Strategies** - An exploration of the theory and practice of creating partnerships and public movement building. Students will be introduced to a number of governance techniques that include interest based negotiations, meeting facilitation and building public narrative. Additionally, students will survey various cases of Indigenous partnerships and public movements. This course will be taught in a seminar format with a heavy focus on simulations.

**NS 430 Indigenous Governance and Partnership Capstone** - This course synthesizes and integrates the range of knowledge and analysis from previous Indigenous governance courses, and normally includes a practical component to enhance the interplay of the theory and actual practice of governance.

To date, eighty-eight students have graduated with a standalone or embedded Certificate (2021), amounting to over 1,600 hours of dedicated research time toward Indigenous-identified projects.<sup>7</sup> Not only do students acquire real life, practical skills, but they also build reciprocal relationships with Indigenous communities and organizations through the provision of research that meets the identified needs of that organization or community. Today, these graduates are continuing to apply their knowledge of Indigenous governance and relationship-building through positions of leadership in their communities, in governments, and in Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations. University–community partnerships are becoming more commonplace in the academic realm, yet the partnership approach is a fundamental aspect of Indigenous Studies from an ontological standpoint.

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<sup>7</sup> For a condensed list of community partners, see the IGP Program website: <https://www.ualberta.ca/native-studies/programs/indigenous-governance-partnership-program/community-based.html>.



### *Outreach Education*

Another aspect of the IGP Program that deepens leadership capacity in the areas of Indigenous governance and partnership is outreach education. Beyond for-credit learning, this is an opportunity for a wider cross-section of learners to engage with these topics. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action* highlight the need for broad-based education that provides non-Indigenous people in government, corporate sector, and general society with professional development training relevant to Indigenous peoples, including skills-based training (#57, #92). This content should include "the history of Aboriginal peoples, including the history and legacy of residential schools, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Treaties and Aboriginal rights, Indigenous law, and Aboriginal–Crown relations. This will require skills-based training in intercultural competency, conflict resolution, human rights, and anti-racism" (TRC *Calls to Action* #57).

In 2008, the IGP conducted another consultation to inform IGP programming, and non-credit executive development arose as a topic at that time (Price 2008). From 2014 to 2019, non-credit executive teaching was provided through customized training modules for the private, public, and non-profit sectors and through the Indigenous Partnership Development Program (IPDP). The aim of the IPDP was to educate non-Indigenous leaders in how to develop better relationships with Indigenous nations. The IPDP was a five-year sponsored partnership between the Faculty of Native Studies and Executive Education (Alberta School of Business), where leaders were offered non-credit certification in the areas of Indigenous histories and present-day governance, laws, economies, cultures, and social realities. The curriculum was presented by scholars, experts, practitioners, and Indigenous leaders and was led by an Academic Director from the Indigenous Governance and Partnership program. As a result, IPDP students have increased their effectiveness in developing and maintaining strong working relationships with Indigenous communities. Similar to the undergraduate Certificate program, there was an important focus on praxis learning, turning education into application in the executives' current leadership position in their workplace. This included a three-month mentorship component where executives worked in teams and developed applied projects relevant to their organization; these projects and learnings were presented in the last session of the program. Significantly, the IPDP graduated over 175 leaders and provided a forum for learning where Indigenous and non-Indigenous executives have established shared understandings and visions for the future. As mentioned, the research and teaching arms of the IGP Program are co-constitutive. The next section will discuss the IGP Research Method.

### **IGP Research Method**

This section introduces the IGP Method. Several Indigenous governance models have been established for teaching and application purposes, including the IGP Framework. Each of these well-established governance *models* has key insights; however, the same attention has not been paid to Indigenous governance research methods. Prioritizing innovations

in Indigenous governance research methods holds potential for the research process to be constitutive. In this way, Indigenous governance research methods will contribute to the revitalization of Indigenous governance systems through the research process. As such, innovative Indigenous governance research methods directly connect back to Indigenous Studies' main goal: Indigenous self-determination (Smith 2012, 120–121) and a resurgent paradigm. With the discipline's central goal being Indigenous self-determination, a number of scholars see Indigenous Studies research as having emancipatory potential (Brown and Strega 2005, 9; Grande 2004, 7).

Thus, innovative Indigenous governance research methods become critical to the discipline and to self-determination. As introduced in the IGP's "Framework" section, the 2016/2017 research project with the MNA was integral as a community-led partnership in informing not only the eight governance and partnership framework areas but also the IGP Method. Next, we will discuss the IGP Program Research Method and describe how it emerged during a research partnership with the MNA.

#### *IGP Method – A Research Case Study and Model*

The 2016/2017 research partnership with the MNA was an extensive research project that included travel to all six Métis regions across Alberta and consulted with hundreds of MNA citizens and disseminated information to thousands of citizens. The research method developed organically; the aim was to "cast a wide net" to uncover larger governance answers. This research method, used for the MNA partnership, has come to be referred to as the "Indigenous Governance and Partnership" (IGP) method (see Figure 5) and offers researchers a way to systematically identify what Indigenous nations need. The IGP Method is discussed here so that it can be applied to other nations and organizations, where useful.

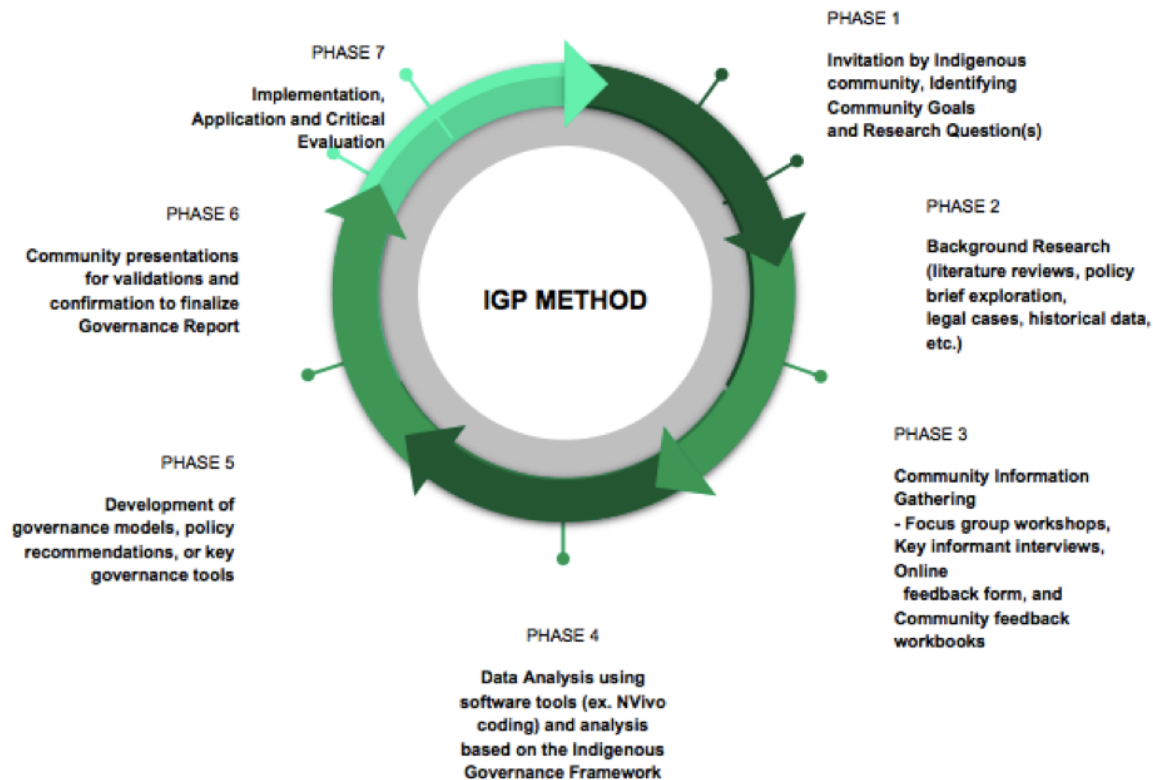


Figure 5: Indigenous Governance and Partnership Method

The first phase of the IGP Method is an invitation from an Indigenous community or organization into their own identified research question and goal; in this way it is community-led research. In the present case, the MNA approached the Faculty of Native Studies with their specific research request. Then, depending on the community-defined strengths and needs, an individualized community research program is co-created. Co-leading the research with communities in this way is an act of Indigenizing the academy because Indigenous communities have a history of being targeted by extractive research practices (*Setting New Directions* 2019, 5): “In the extraction model, communities rarely participate in the development of research questions or are entitled to determine the validity of research ‘findings’” (Gaudry 2011, 114). By contrast, the IGP Method orients its research questions and outputs to Indigenous community needs rather than “toward non-Indigenous outsiders,” as often happens in extractive research (Gaudry 2011, 115). This aligns with the Faculty of Native Studies’ strategic plan, where community engaged research is identified as a strategic priority (FNS 2020). To co-lead the research with the MNA, this project had oversight from a community advisory committee with elected and administrative leaders from MNA as well as feedback loops with all the elected leaders throughout the MNA.

The university team included Shalene Jobin (the Principal Investigator), Kirsten Lindquist (who was IGP Program Administrator at the time), Avery Letendre (who was

an MA Research Assistant at the time), and Chris Andersen (Dean of FNS), who provided informal advice and support. This was a form of what Innes calls “Insider-Outsider” research (2009). Jobin’s late father and paternal family are members of the MNA and have played an active role in the MNA for many generations. As Jobin is also a member of Red Pheasant First Nation through her maternal line, she cannot also be a Métis citizen given current citizenship criteria (there is no dual citizenship mechanism in place). Lindquist is a member of the MNA, and Letendre’s husband is an MNA member. Andersen is Métis and is a leading scholar in Métis studies research.

Once invited into the research, with the project scope and community oversight mechanisms established, phase two of the IGP Method is a review of community-specific background information and literature about current governance structures. Historical data, legal cases, policy briefs, and organizational/community reports are considered alongside relevant theoretical scholarship and case studies pertinent to the nation or organization. After systematically going through this material, the research team is able to identify questions and topics that can be addressed with key informants and members of the Indigenous nation.

In phase three, these questions and topics are pursued. Four mechanisms, in this example, were utilized to offer community members, leaders, and staff opportunities to provide input: 1) focus group workshops are made available to citizens in every region; 2) community feedback workbooks are provided to focus group participants (for anonymous written feedback that is not discussed with the whole group); 3) an online feedback form is made available to constituents (with questions that were discussed in each focus group, for those that cannot attend in person); and 4) key informant interviews are conducted with leaders and decision makers with specialized working knowledge. Citizen engagement through multiple avenues builds excitement about the project through the community-based research process and, while time- and resource-intensive, is an important methodological consideration because it places priority on hearing from all the voices in the collective.<sup>8</sup> For the MNA, the IGP research team hosted focus groups for community members in each of the six regions. Specifically, the community focus groups were held in Peace River, Lac La Biche, Slave Lake, Bonnyville, Edmonton, and Calgary.<sup>9</sup> With participant approval, the focus groups and interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. We also recorded discussion points on flip chart paper for participants to review and confirm during the sessions, which were later transcribed into written notes. We have written another article that discusses the creation of the methodology behind the steps, which can be co-developed with the community while upholding their philosophy and systems of knowledge.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Specifically, Kovach (2009) identifies “including everybody” as a Cree way (136).

<sup>9</sup> Consultation Map, MNA Regions, graphic created by the MNA for this research project.

<sup>10</sup> This article is titled “Métis Research and Relationality: Auntie Governance, the Visiting Way, and Kitchen Table Reflections” and is currently under review.



In phase four, the findings from the literature and contextual review in phase two are integrated with data from the interviews, focus groups, online feedback forms, and community feedback workbooks in phase three. To do so, the audio recordings from phase three are transcribed, and these documents are uploaded to coding and data analysis software, such as NVIVO (the software used for the MNA project). This process allows for the highlights to be identified and summarized and for the themes to emerge from the voices in the community. While time-intensive, the IGP Method includes a broad literature analysis in combination with collaborative and conversational practices, held with a wide cross-section of community members. This approach is taken because governance principles, traditions, and structures are located in both the formal and informal knowledge that people possess and in literature (academic and non-academic). Similar to the ILRU or Story Analysis Legal Method that was formalized at the University of Victoria, the IGP Method is a “collective enterprise,” a key element “that serves as a legitimizing factor” (Friedland and Napoleon 2015, 26). Synthesizing data from a wide array of sources allows for the gaps, points of consensus, and common aspirational themes to surface and provides validation of the results (Friedland and Napoleon 2015, 29).

Governance models, tools, and policy recommendations are then created in phase five as a response to the themes and gaps that have surfaced. These recommendations are offered back to the community or organization in a draft report alongside summaries from the literature and background research review (phase two) and a high-level overview from the interviews and consultations (phase three). Once this is complete, in draft form, phase six

includes a presentation of the preliminary findings available to elected leadership and the citizens of the nation. For the MNA project, this presentation took place at the 88th Annual General Assembly and delivered an oral and visual report of the findings to all members in attendance. Following the presentation of findings to the nation, adjustments and gaps can be addressed as they surface in order to provide a final report to the nation. Finally, in phase seven, the organization or nation implements and applies the recommendations of their choice and evaluates how the recommendations work for their nation and context. This aspect of the method upholds the ultimate decision-making authority of the nation and may or may not include continued partnership with the research team.

The IGP Method pertains to Indigenous governance, yet the recommendations made to the MNA are not necessarily exclusively Indigenous in nature. Rather, they include three governance structural options that embed traditional Indigenous governance systems (such as the inclusion of Youth and Elders Councils and direct representational government that is part of the current MNA governance structure) and western governance mechanisms (such as a Métis Act and Métis Constitution). As Smith has written, "... indigenous nations and communities have to develop twenty-first-century governance approaches that are embedded in an [I]ndigenous value system and geared to meet contemporary social challenges with the best minds and skillsets of the community" (2012, 157). Being an Indigenous nation-led project, we draw from the guidance of the community advisors about how they envision their governance systems.

This project was decolonizing in scope, with the goal of strengthening the MNA as an authorized, representative governing body of Métis citizens in Alberta and Canada. For context, the MNA has a longstanding history of being regarded as merely a cultural group, incorporated under the *Societies Act* in Alberta, which regulates charitable, cultural, and recreational groups. By contrast, the MNA citizenry expressly stated their desire for greater recognition and authority of the MNA as their government. The MNA's 2015 Ordinary Resolution #7 states that "it is the desire of the Métis people to develop a Governing structure that is compatible with the 21st Century ... to take their fight to all the levels of governments on legislation, policies, and program issues that is productive for the Métis peoples." In response to these aims, the final recommendations to the MNA included solutions that address complexities within the contextual realities of Indigenous governance, solutions that are decolonizing and contend with the colonial reality of governmental relations in Canada today. These realities are a part of the Indigenous governance landscape and must be grappled with in their complexities when crafting solutions that are self-determining and resurgent for Indigenous nations to be legitimately regarded as *governments* and *societies*. The IGP Method and framework have been used in another large Indigenous nation research project (with a Cree community) through a wise-practices approach, where the framework proved valuable and applicable to more than one Indigenous people group.

In the next section, we discuss how IGP programming has developed partnerships, as well as the challenges that may arise in partnership and how to cultivate good relationships guided by *mīyo-wichetowin* and *wahkohtowin*. The article concludes with a brief snapshot of future directions and reflections.

**Maintaining *mîyo-wichetowin***

To engage respectfully, and in alignment with Indigenous research methods that centralize long-term relationships between researchers and communities, lasting community relationships are necessary and will often go far beyond the scope of one project. In the previous section, IGP's research partnership relationship with the Métis Nation of Alberta was described. Partnering with other faculties, universities, and research fellows is another way to strengthen the research team's capacity and offer communities rigorous research support. The IGP Program has evolved from an undergraduate Certificate program to a multi-faceted research, teaching, and training program. With a focus on the concepts of *wahkohtowin* and *miyo-wichetowin*, Dr. Jobin partnered with Dr. Hadley Friedland (Faculty of Law) to create a new initiative. The Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge (WLGL) was created in December 2018 as a partnership between the Faculties of Native Studies (IGP Program) and Law (with co-founders Shalene Jobin and Hadley Friedland) to respond to the goals and visions of Indigenous communities who seek applied research that rebuilds their nations and resonates with their own governing and legal traditions. The purpose of the Wahkohtowin Lodge is to establish and maintain a sustainable community-engaged, interdisciplinary unit to (1) support Indigenous communities' goals of identifying, articulating, and implementing their own laws and governance; (2) develop, gather, amplify, and transfer wise practices, promising methods, and research tools; and (3) produce useful and accessible practical governance resources and public legal education.<sup>11</sup> Through the vision of *mîyo-wichetowin*, the Wahkohtowin Law and Governance Lodge has partnerships with other universities in Canada and ten research fellows. Wise practices, projects, and workshops have been conducted collaboratively by multiple partners working together. Moreover, each research fellow has brought a different set of expertise and has strengthened the overall work of the team. Though the goals for research and teaching in upholding Indigenous laws and governance are many, there are abundant opportunities when embracing a multi-university, interdisciplinary, broad-based approach.

Taking a partnership approach can enhance the rigor of the research; protect and enhance longer-term relationships with Indigenous community partners; and counteract burnout among researchers taking on respectful, broad-based research projects and methods, as they are time- and resource-intensive. In order to hear from a wide array of members through broad-based consultation, extensive travel and funding may be required, and the commitment needed from the research team can lead to burnout. Additionally, the commitment required will necessitate that a longer research timeframe be embedded in the university–community partnership agreement. Undertaking long-term research commitments and partnership building requires a great deal of flexibility, negotiation, and administration – both within the university and with external academic and community partners – and, while it can be rewarding, it can also present many complexities and challenges that require navigation.

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11 [www.ualberta.ca/wahkohtowin](http://www.ualberta.ca/wahkohtowin).

One of the learnings is that long-term partnerships can be serviced only in proportion to the capacity that the centre, program, or institute has and that it is important not to overextend the research team in order to protect the relationship that has been formed with the community partner and ensure that it is long-term and lasting. As such, it is important to allocate the appropriate amount of time during the planning stage and match the project scope to the community's needs. This will act as a protective feature to mitigate burnout, maintain good relations, and ensure that community needs will be fully met. In summary, broad-based consultation methods can be used by individual researchers with adequate time and funding, but it may be best suited through partnership or through a centre, program, or institute that has more resources and a longer time horizon.

While partnerships with other academic units and non-Indigenous organizations create opportunities, several partnership principles can serve as protective factors enabling the relationship to be strong over the long run. Through our past work with others, the IGP Program has generated some informal partnership principles that are important for upholding the self-determination of Indigenous Studies as a discipline and decolonizing the academy through the academic work that we do and the guidelines with which it is carried out. First, a true partnership will share control and decision making and, as such, will be equitable in nature. Second, decision making will be taken up transparently, where both parties are provided with the same information and advance notification is given to both partners for input and perspectives on decisions that can affect their projects and initiatives. For example, in a true partnership, financial decisions and information are shared equally by all the parties and are not unilaterally held, where one party is informed of activity once it has already taken place. Third, participation in key engagements will take place together. If there are external funder or stakeholder meetings, for example, these opportunities will be disclosed so that both parties can attend and engage in these meetings together. As a result, the relationship will be reciprocal, mutually beneficial, share responsibilities and rewards, and be deemed decolonial in its processes and outcomes.

Numerous publications provide guidelines and principles for decolonizing community-based research projects with Indigenous communities (Kovach 2009; Smith 2012; Stanton 2014). Several publications also address decolonizing principles for teaching in the academy (Battiste 2017; Gaudry and Lorenz 2018). While decolonizing research methodologies and ethics employed with Indigenous communities will often be relevant to nations and organizations situated outside of academia, this can overlook the partnerships, research, and teaching relationships that occur with Indigenous Studies faculties and departments, programs, research centres and institutes, and Indigenous-controlled colleges (that are situated within academia) and how they are laden with power differentials. Though well-intentioned, settler-controlled faculties or organizations can be uninformed of the implications of their positions of power. Alternatively, there may be an unwillingness to be reflexive or dialogical, or to shift power when working with Indigenous-controlled academic units (Stanton 2014). In other words, settler-controlled faculties or organizations may sometimes not be willing to respectfully respond to feedback about the ways these



positions of power are impacting the partnership. As Jones and Jenkins (2008) write, “even progressive settler educators who seek collaboration with indigenous others necessarily remain only partially able to hear and see” (11).

Incomplete comprehension or unwillingness to adapt to feedback can make it difficult to have lasting, respectful, reciprocal partnerships. By observing some of the principles that the IGP Program and others have identified regarding reflexivity, control, transparency, and participation – whether the partnership is located outside of the walls of the university or within the academic realm – will be a step towards decolonizing relationships when working with Indigenous-controlled units. When facing those who are not attuned to these principles or when seeing shifts in power take place in practice, it can be advisable for Indigenous Studies units to focus their energies elsewhere. Jones and Jenkins (2008) address this by writing “if shared talk becomes an exercise only in making themselves more understandable or accessible to colonizer groups, with no commensurate shifts in real political power, then it becomes better to engage in strengthening the internal communication and knowledge, as well as self-reliance, of the people” (13). It is important that partnership principles be applied in order to have lasting and respectful partnerships that genuinely work towards decolonization in partnership processes and outcomes.

#### *Future Directions and Reflections*

One exciting area of research is the development of resurgent Indigenous research methods that centralize good relations. Jobin defines resurgent research methods as those that uphold a central component of Indigenous peoplehood within the research process itself. The core of any Indigenous Studies research paradigm should include Indigenous self-determination (Smith 2012, 120–121). Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies* (2012) is a canonical text on decolonizing methodologies for Indigenous research. From this perspective, Indigenous self-determination is about more than a simple focus on political outcomes; it strives to achieve social justice in social, cultural, economic, and psychological milieus (Smith 2012). Jobin is conceptualizing the use of an Indigenous resurgent methodology which draws from the peoplehood model (Holm, Pearson, and Chavis 2003; Jobin 2013), whereby resurgent methods are developed in which the research process becomes constitutive of important revitalization work in the nation. Cherokee Indigenous studies scholar Je Corntassel explains that a “peoplehood model provides a useful way of thinking about the nature of everyday resurgence practices both personally and collectively. If one thinks of peoplehood as the interlocking features of language, homeland, ceremonial cycles, and sacred living histories, a disruption to any one of these practices threatens all aspects of everyday life” (2012, 89). An Indigenous resurgent methodology includes the development of Indigenous resurgent research methods, in collaboration with Indigenous communities, that uphold Indigenous languages, Indigenous lands, ceremonial cycles, and living histories (and others) to rebuild Indigenous governance systems in both the research process and through the applied research outcomes. The next phase of this research program broaden resurgent methods to make them available for community use. Based on the research

process explained above (see Figure 5), the IGP Framework contains the key elements of leadership, identity, culture and belonging, land and livelihood, legal orders, historic and intergenerational perspectives, political and public service, legitimacy and voice, and diplomacy. These eight elements are essential to consider and gather citizens' perspectives on when developing renewed Indigenous governance systems (see Phase 4, above). A key component of this next research program phase is developing and publishing innovations – particularly Indigenous research methods – that further Indigenous resurgence. While focusing on developing resurgent research methods based on the interlocking features of the peoplehood model (land, ceremonial cycle, territory/homelands, and sacred living histories), the model itself benefits by expanding to encompass key elements of the IGP Framework, including Indigenous legal orders (Napoleon and Friedland 2014), Indigenous livelihoods (Jobin 2013, 2014), and Indigenous leadership (Makokis 2009). Following the guidance of these authors, the IGP Program will embed a gendered analysis throughout the eight framework areas in research.<sup>12</sup>

Within the current Indigenous resurgent methods research program,<sup>13</sup> the aspiration is to develop a research toolbox with an assortment of Indigenous governance and partnership research methods that can be used to assist in the rebuilding of Indigenous nations. After determining a community's defined strengths and needs, the research team will create an individualized community research program. Indigenous communities have a history of being pulled into extractive research relationships with academic scholars (Gaudry 2011); in co-producing this research with these communities, this program becomes part of Indigenousizing the academy. Community members are trained in the methods they want to use and are knowledge authorities in their community's research process. Different interdisciplinary teams of scholars will be brought together from across the academy to support the expertise required. Depending on the community's needs, support will be available from the design of the research question all the way through to implementation. The community relationships will be long-term – lasting years, and ideally, even decades.

In conclusion, and regarding future work, we circle back to the beginning of this article, where we introduced *mīyo-pimâtisiwin*. Settlers' striving for the good life has often been at the cost of Indigenous nations, people, lands, and relations. Indigenous Studies in our teaching, research, and service works towards changing this. Métis scholar Dr. Cindy Gaudet explores the concept of the "good life" through the notion of "living and being

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<sup>12</sup> In the continual process of reflection and adaptation, we realized the need to explicitly include gender and identity in the research process. Kirsten Lindquist, Shalene Jobin, and Avery Letendre have also co-authored a chapter on the topic of gender (forthcoming in the book in review, *Strong Metis Women Academics*, edited by Laura Forsythe and Jennifer Markides), called "Métis Research and Relationality: Auntie Governance, the Visiting Way, and Kitchen Table Reflections." For resources on including gender in a community-led research project, see the "Gender Inside Indigenous Law Toolkit" produced by the Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU 2016).

<sup>13</sup> This is the research program co-author Jobin holds as her current Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Governance.

well in relation” (2019, 47). Gaudet calls us to do the work in ourselves and in our research that “inspires social values, kinship, an understanding of women’s contribution, and self-recognition in relation to the land, history, community, and values” (2019, 47). This is a co-constitutive process in which we uphold principles embedded in Indigenous worldviews while adapting the models, process, program, and ourselves in the process. Indigenous governance and partnership are about upholding *mîyo-pimâtisiwin*, learning how good relations take shape on the land between humans and non-humans, within and between Indigenous communities, and in relationship with settler society.

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