

First Nations Data Sovereignty Guidelines



Self-determination is a fundamental right for First Nations peoples and is a guiding principle of the First Nations Research policy. Control over data drawn from, or impacting communities, related to, or emerging from One Basin CRC initiatives must be part of Basin communities' self-determination agendas. The First Nations Data Sovereignty Guidelines support advocacy for community data rights, promoting research and collaboration standards that uphold and advance shared data management strategies. Data sovereignty refers to the right of First Nations communities to control, manage, and govern data related to community, lands, waterways, cultures, languages and knowledge systems. Data sovereignty, relative to the First Nations Research policy, extends beyond access only to project data; instead emphasises First Nations authority to determine how data is collected, stored, used, and shared, in accordance with community values, protocols, and cultural practices. The First Nations Data Sovereignty Guidelines offer suggestions to guide project leaders toward advocating for the rights of First Nations communities to govern and benefit from data collected during One Basin CRC projects.

The key considerations for data sovereignty include:

1. Data collection must be ethical and respectful, incorporating culturally appropriate methods and ensuring that data is accurate and reliable.
2. Support should be provided to First Nations communities to develop capacity for managing and utilising community-centric data. This may include, but is not limited to training, resources, and technical assistance.
3. Processes related to data collection, management, and usage must be transparent, with clear communication and reporting to First Nations communities about how their data is handled.
4. Data must be securely stored and protected to prevent unauthorised access and breaches of privacy. This may include but is not limited to implementing measures to safeguard personal, community and/or sacred or gender-specific data.
5. Data should be governed by First Nations communities or organisations designated by them. This may include but is not limited to establishing mechanisms for oversight and decision-making related to data collection, storage, and use.
6. First Nations communities should have legal and practical ownership of data collected about community, including control over access, use, and dissemination.
7. First Nations data stewards or custodians should be appointed to manage and protect data in ways that reflect community interests, aspirations and values. This may include but is not limited to safeguarding culturally sensitive (e.g., sacred and/or gender-specific) data and ensuring it is secured and accessed responsibly.

8. First Nations communities must receive fair and equitable access to the benefits derived from data proportional to input and impact, this may include, but is not limited to research findings, publications, and other outcomes, such commercialisation opportunities.
9. Project leaders should ensure mechanisms are created for monitoring and evaluating how data is managed and used, ensuring adherence to First Nations data sovereignty principles and addressing any issues or concerns that arise.