
Métis Nation
of Ontario 



OFIFC



Local Urban Aboriginal Gatherings Discussion Guide

**By Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), Ontario Federation of
Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), and Ontario Native
Women's Association (ONWA)**

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Background

In Budget 2014, the Provincial Government, through the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs (MAA), committed to fund the Urban Aboriginal Action Plan over three years. Through this initiative, MAA committed to coordinate an engagement strategy in consultation with Aboriginal people, municipalities and the federal government to better align programming directed towards urban Aboriginal people.¹ The Aboriginal Partners of the Urban Aboriginal Policy Engagement Table (UAOPET) are collaborating with MAA to implement key initiatives from the Urban Aboriginal Action Plan, including the coordination of local and provincial engagement strategies.

The Métis Nation of Ontario (MNO), the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres (OFIFC), and the Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) have put forward ten urban and off-reserve Aboriginal communities across Ontario to serve as sites to host gatherings. It is recognised there are many other communities that have valued input and we anticipate other opportunities for broader feedback on these issues in the future. The proposed gatherings will also serve as a catalyst and seed new opportunities for you to undertake community planning activities that will support locally driven strategies in your community.

Purpose

This Discussion Guide is designed to provide participants with a detailed overview of the gathering, including context, key objectives and questions.

Context

The gathering is an opportunity for you to engage community stakeholders in providing input to inform the development of the Urban Aboriginal Action Plan and consider how existing relationships may advance the coordination of programs and services at the local and regional level. It is also a space for you to identify wise practices and establish community networks that can improve service delivery systems in your community.

Local decision makers are well-positioned to provide valuable feedback based on their experience. With this object in mind, you have been invited because your organization has an important role to play in improving the coordination of service delivery systems for urban Aboriginal people in your community. In addition to this, many of the decision makers participating in the gathering currently partner with urban Aboriginal organizations in the area and can draw on these experiences to identify wise practices.

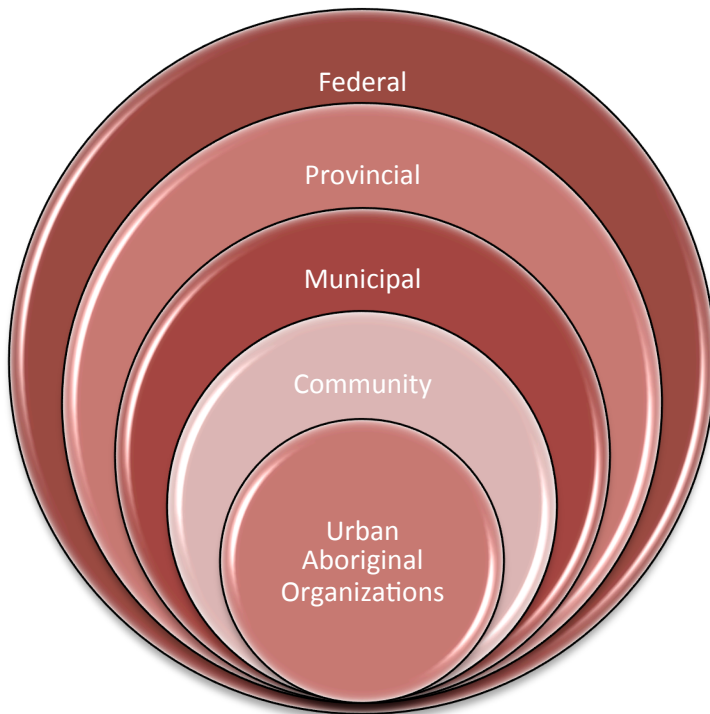
We recognize that complex issues currently experienced by urban Aboriginal communities can benefit from increased collaboration and community engagement. In order to address these issues proactively urban Aboriginal communities across Ontario must consider system-wide approaches and relationship building between organizations. This requires greater cross-

¹ Ontario Budget. (2014). *Building Opportunity Securing for our Future*. P, 130. Retrieved from http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/budget/ontariobudgets/2014/papers_all.pdf

sectoral collaboration between all stakeholders—public, private and non-profit— that have an important role to play in improving socio-economic outcomes for urban Aboriginal people.

Identifying Key Stakeholders

Multiple levels of government and the non-profit sector are involved in the delivery of crucial services to urban Aboriginal people. While this can complicate engagement it can also offer opportunities for innovation and leveraging for the benefit of the urban Aboriginal community. Relevant stakeholders and non-Aboriginal communities have a crucial role to play in transforming systems to promote social inclusion for all people, including those who identify as Aboriginal.



Federal: Fund key programs, including FedNor, First Nations Non-Insured Health Benefits, Aboriginal Skills and Employment and Training Strategy (ASETS) and Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS).

Provincial: Responsible for equitable delivery of services to all Ontarians, including urban Aboriginal people, through various ministries.

Municipal: Involved in a broad range program delivery areas that impact urban Aboriginal communities, e.g. social assistance, housing and homelessness, children’s services, poverty reduction, recreation, culture and economic development.

Community: Includes local public sector institutions (schools, police etc.), private sector (employers, businesses) and non-profit organisations.

Urban Aboriginal Organisations: Self-determined and determining Aboriginal-run organisations mandated to serve the Aboriginal community through the provision of services in a broad range of areas.

Framing the Discussion

Key Questions and Considerations

We have prepared an overview of key themes and the questions that will be discussed at the gathering with the aim of facilitating a policy discussion that will consider the following objectives:

- A. Examining how existing systems and structures benefit or impede effective coordination of programs and services at the local and regional level;
- B. Identifying Wise Practices in urban Aboriginal community development, partnerships and network building;
- C. Identifying opportunities for increased urban Aboriginal community development, partnerships and network building.

Theme 1: Current successes and challenges in relationship building in urban Aboriginal communities

Partnerships in communities can take many different forms. They can range from protocol agreements with police, school boards or Children's Aid Societies to referral between agencies, or more informal arrangements for summer employment at local businesses. These collaborations, whatever form they take, are based upon relationships that are developed over time between decision makers and organizations. Their objective is invariably to benefit all parties concerned and result in improved service delivery or outcomes for urban Aboriginal people.

1. What are some successful partnerships you have in your community and why do they work?
2. What are some barriers to partnership and networks and what do you do to address them?

Theme 2: Understanding the Issues: Establishing Priorities

In advancing collaborative approaches to address urban Aboriginal issues at the local and regional level communities must identify their priorities. Many of the current issues are interrelated and hard to define. Nonetheless, communities need to understand what

they want to achieve; establishing priorities is a first step towards this. Building consensus around joint priorities is often a long process that may change over time. The priorities identified today are by no means set in stone; they will provide a general direction for communities to work towards and continue to gather around. Participating stakeholders should not confine themselves to their sector specific priorities but consider the broader issues in the discussion.

3. What are some priorities your community should move forward with and why?
4. What resources exist at the local and regional level to address these priorities?

Theme 3: What Works? Identifying Wise Practices in Urban Aboriginal Community partnerships, networking and community development

Your organisation has been included in this discussion because you have an important role to play in advancing urban Aboriginal issues at a local and regional level. In many cases, strong working relationships have resulted in the establishment of wise practices. This discussion theme is focused on understanding what makes a wise practice and how it is developed. Participants will be asked to consider how the identified wise practices improve socio-economic outcomes for urban Aboriginal people

5. What is a wise practice in your community and why?
6. How do these wise practices improve outcomes for urban Aboriginal community members?
7. How were these wise practices developed? What was in place to support them?

Theme 4: Moving Forward: Identifying Strategies to Advance Locally Determined Priorities

The final discussion theme will consider the next steps that will be taken to advance identified priorities. It is important for all those participating in this discussion to bring forth what they can contribute to their community's bundle. In Indigenous cultures, the bundle includes the sacred medicines and tools that are needed to get through life's journey. Reflecting on this notion, within the context of advancing locally determined priorities, the community bundle is comprised of resources that will enable the community as a whole to address those priorities. Building a community bundle will be the foundation of our work going forward.

8. What assets does your organisation have that could be leveraged to improve outcomes for urban Aboriginal people?
9. What relationships do not yet exist that are needed to achieve the identified priorities and what process should be in place to establish those relationships?
10. How will you know you have achieved your priorities?
11. What plan of action will be undertaken to achieve your priorities?

We hope you find this process constructive and that it will help you foster the kinds of relationships in your community that will lead to improved outcomes for your urban Aboriginal community and the community as a whole. Thank you for your participation.

Contact

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact:

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