

# GUIDANCE FOR THE HIV SECTOR IN ONTARIO:

RECONCILIATION IN ACTION,  
A COMMUNITY PROCESS

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We recognize and honour the experience and knowledge of the Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers and partners who supported the development of this guidance as members of the Reconciliation in Action Working Group. We also recognize the culture, strength, contributions and resilience of First Nation, Inuit, and Métis people on these lands.

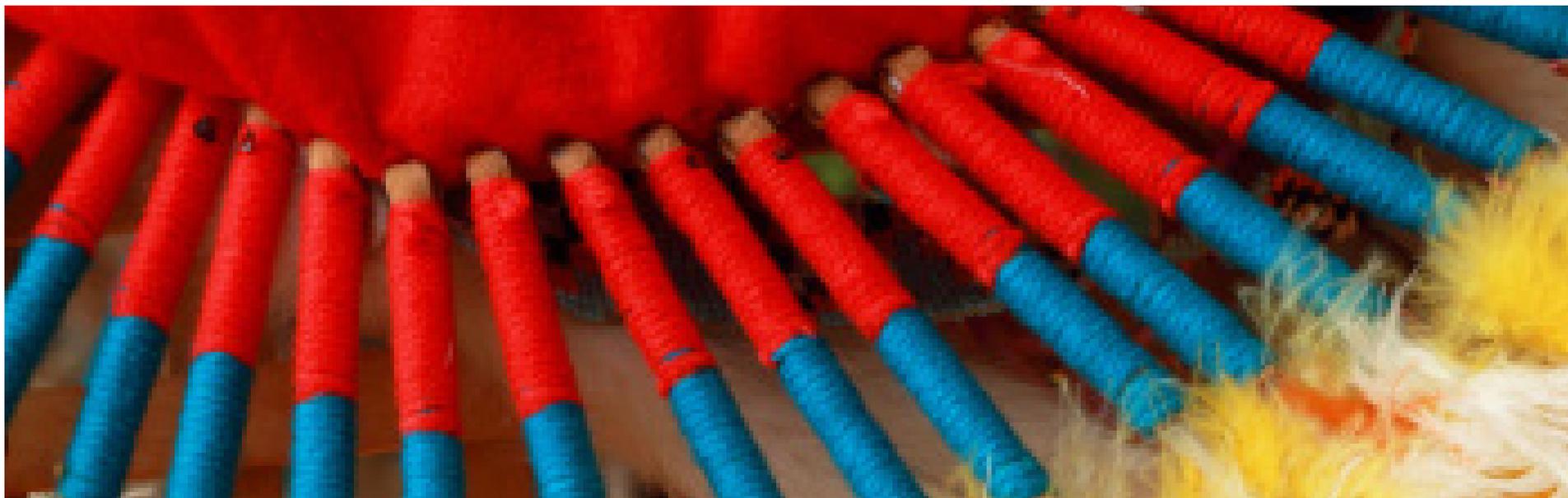
The Reconciliation in Action Working Group extends wholehearted thanks to our Elder advisors Linda Barkman, Linda Plain and Pat Green, and to Mark Atanasoff from the Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy for their mentorship and support throughout the development of this Guidance. Thanks also to John Miller from the Ontario Organizational Development Program for his consulting work on this project, and to the Ontario Ministry of Health's AIDS and Hepatitis C Programs and Provincial Programs Branch for funding support.

Following creation of the Reconciliation in Action Working Group during the Ontario AIDS Network's 2018 Leadership Symposium, organizations within our sector agreed that we must begin and/or renew our efforts toward Reconciliation. This reinvigorated process must draw from a renewed commitment to self-education, and focus on transferring of power, decision-making and funding to Indigenous-led organizations and projects. As a sector, our journey along the path toward Truth and Reconciliation must be grounded in self-reflection and self-sufficiency. Also required is an acknowledgment of our privilege as settler organizations, of the inequitable distribution of resources, and contrition for our sector's historical perpetuation of a colonialist system.

The 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action were a challenge to non-Indigenous Canadians, including community-based organizations, to do better and led to many conversations in the Ontario HIV sector. In response to longstanding discrimination and social exclusion, Indigenous Peoples may avoid seeking support, services, testing, and treatment. Our sector must develop and improve practices to more effectively work with and support Indigenous service-users and Indigenous service providers. This guidance outlines a process steps designed to support organizations to begin or continue pursuing their unique vision and mission while transforming their work, connection, and relationship with Indigenous service-users and Indigenous organizations. With each step of the process, we must remember that education without action is not Reconciliation. Most importantly, success of this process will be determined not by organizations who implement this guidance, but by Indigenous partners, Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS, and Indigenous service-users.

As settler organizations, we have a duty to name and acknowledge our role in the traumatic life circumstances faced by many Indigenous Peoples related to the ongoing and undue burden of colonialism and racism and discrimination. We also recognize the intergenerational traumas caused by the residential school and child welfare systems. Though provincially and federally funded services, programs, and supports are made available to Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS, there continues to be a lack of relevant programs led and affirmed by Indigenous Peoples themselves or examples of effective partnerships between settler and Indigenous-led organizations. Too often we have allowed systemic racism and anti-Indigenous discrimination and a failure to consistently offer culturally relevant services to exist as barriers to Indigenous Peoples seeking support and services.

It is time to move away from and beyond the historically ineffective and tiresome frameworks and prescriptive efforts to improve services and access for Indigenous people living with HIV. We have a responsibility and duty as service providers to undergo the critical steps of self-reflection, self-education, and self-assessment at all levels of our organizations. Incumbent on us, not Indigenous Peoples, is the work of identifying gaps, missteps, and setting clear goals along the path toward Reconciliation. As we build trust and develop relationships with partners, Elders/Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS, we must commit to listening deeply and heeding partner advice and input, particularly concerning the lack meaningful engagement and inclusion of Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS within our organizations and the broader sector.



In order to begin mending our relationship with Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS, organizations within our sector must each engage in an ever-evolving process of organizational transformation that is aligned with the principles of Truth and Reconciliation.

Organizations must strive to:

- Become informed and educated
- Cultivate partnerships with IPHAs, Indigenous organizations and Elders/Knowledge Keepers
- Ensure their work and programs are Indigenous-led and staffed
- Cede/transfer program funding and research dollars to Indigenous organizations

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## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- The 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action were a challenge to non-Indigenous Canadians to do better. It has led to a conversation that has filtered down to the Ontario HIV sector. The question facing our sector is: What should be the work of Reconciliation in our sector, and, more specifically, in our organizations? The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls has further challenged would-be allies to move from intentions to action.
- In October 2018, at the Ontario AIDS Network's HIV Sector Leadership Symposium, the Reconciliation in Action Working Group was formed. It was recognized that for most of the sector's organizations, there is much work to be done, but that guidance is needed to support that work.
- The Reconciliation in Action Working Group has been guided by Indigenous partners and Elders/Knowledge Keepers. The group is receiving Elder/Knowledge Keeper support and advice from Elders/Knowledge Keepers Linda Barkman, Pat Green and Linda Plain, and is composed of representatives/advisors from the Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy (OAHAS) who provide the group with organizational guidance, as well as six non-Indigenous AIDS service organizations (ASOs):
  1. AIDS Committee of North Bay and Area
  2. Elevate NWO
  3. Ontario AIDS Network
  4. PASAN
  5. Réseau ACCESS Network
  6. Gilbert Centre

The working group's task has been to create a guidance that will help Ontario's AIDS service organizations and HIV Resources Ontario members to begin (and continue) the difficult work of Reconciliation with Indigenous people in their communities. This guidance provides options and examples to support that process and draws, where appropriate, from examples of work currently underway within our sector.

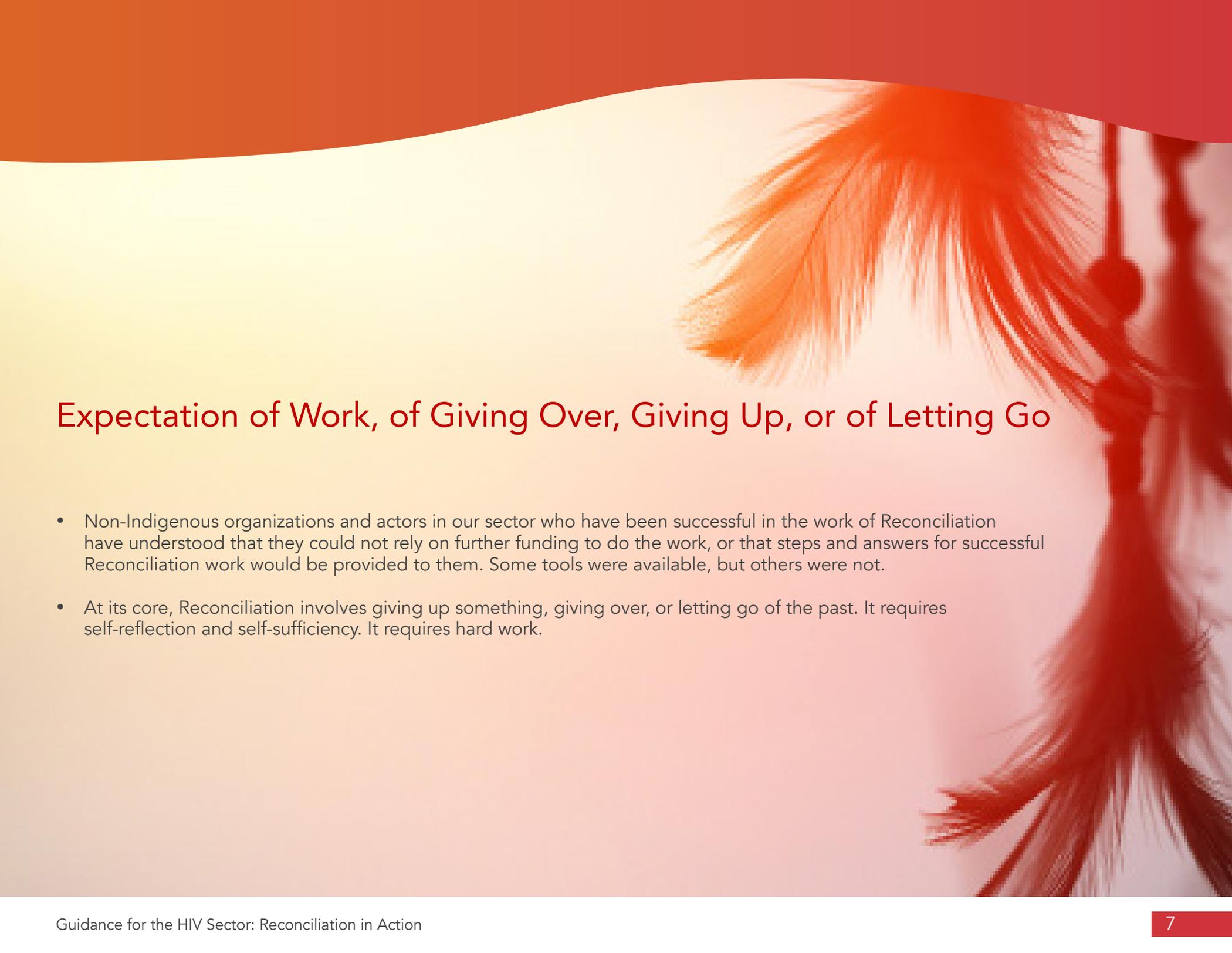


# THIS IS A PROCESS

## It is not a framework, accord or self-accreditation

- This guidance is not a framework. 'Framework' is a word that many in Indigenous communities are tired of hearing, as such frameworks seldom lead to action. Similarly, 'declarations' and 'accords' have too often been commitments without follow-through. This guidance is not a recommendation for self-accreditation, although there are opportunities for organizations to celebrate and report on their progress along the journey.
- Instead, this guidance proposes a process termed Reconciliation in Action. It is one that begins with self-education and community-building with Indigenous partners and Indigenous service users, but where those first steps are part of a long-term strategy.
- It is intentionally named as a process because there is a good deal of work to do. And that work, if done in a good way, will lead organizations not to an end point, but to a new beginning with Indigenous partners and communities. The process of Reconciliation and the positive outcomes of our Reconciliation work aim to perpetuate one another, eventually blurring the line between the two.
- Most importantly, the success of this process will be determined not by organizations themselves, but by Indigenous partners, Indigenous people living with HIV, and Indigenous service users.





## Expectation of Work, of Giving Over, Giving Up, or of Letting Go

- Non-Indigenous organizations and actors in our sector who have been successful in the work of Reconciliation have understood that they could not rely on further funding to do the work, or that steps and answers for successful Reconciliation work would be provided to them. Some tools were available, but others were not.
- At its core, Reconciliation involves giving up something, giving over, or letting go of the past. It requires self-reflection and self-sufficiency. It requires hard work.

# COMMUNITY CONSENSUS-BUILDING CONCERNING THE RECONCILIATION IN ACTION GUIDANCE

To achieve a consensus on this guidance within Ontario's HIV sector, the working group is following its own process:

1. Working group, advised by the Ontario Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Strategy (OAHAS), develops and refines initial drafts of the guidance.
2. An Ontario AIDS Network (OAN)-supported webinar, opened and closed by Elder/Knowledge Keeper Linda Barkman, held on August 15, 2019. This webinar presented the working group's proposed process to sector stakeholders (Executive Directors, Priority Population Network Directors/Coordinators, Program Coordinators and front-line staff, board members, Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS, other affected Indigenous service users, and other people living with HIV). Feedback was received and enhanced this guidance. **(Refine guidance)**
3. A meeting with three community Elders/Knowledge Keepers (Linda Barkman, an Elder/Knowledge Keeper from the Thunder Bay area, and Pat Green and Linda Plain, Elders/Knowledge Keepers from the Toronto area) held on September 19, 2019 ahead of OAN annual meeting, solicited their input and refined the process **(Refine guidance)**
4. A brief presentation to OAN members at the annual meeting in September of 2019.
5. A conversation with the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN) concerning data collection in September and October 2019
6. A conversation with the AIDS & Hepatitis C Unit of the Ontario Ministry of Health in October of 2019 to seek feedback and endorsement from the main funders.
7. A more thorough presentation of the guidance to OAN members at the October 2019 HIV Sector Leadership Symposium (October 30, 31 and November 1, 2019), to receive sector endorsement and solicit suggestions for refinements.
8. A presentation during the OAN Middle Managers' Retreat in December of 2019.
9. A checking-in with the Elders/Knowledge Keepers on January 24, 2020 to update them on changes and seek input. **(Refine guidance)**
10. A presentation of the guidance to Board Chairs at the OAN Board Chair/Executive Director retreat in March of 2020 to further increase sector buy-in from governance leaders, and to seek any additional suggested refinements. **(Final refinement of the guidance)**
11. The final version of the guidance and any associated lists of tools is sent out to all OAN members in August of 2020.

# THE GUIDANCE

## Steps, Work and Outcomes

This Reconciliation in Action guidance proposes a process that all Ontario HIV sector organizations can follow, including, AIDS service organizations (ASO), and members of HIV Resources Ontario (HRO) providing support to the sector's ASOs. Because Reconciliation, relationship mending, and organizational transformation take time, each organization's process is expected to last and evolve over many years.

### Notes for AIDS Service Organizations

Follow the steps to transform how service is delivered to Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS, other Indigenous service users, and Indigenous partner organizations. ASO work toward Reconciliation will be supported by HRO members. With that said, transformation of the sector is expected to take place over a number of years. As such, ASOs should begin their work immediately and not wait for HRO members to complete their own process.

### Notes for HIV Resources Ontario

Follow the steps to identify different ways of supporting Reconciliation that align with their organizational mandates. This can include creating additional tools or adapting their support to ASOs, either in collaboration with other HRO members or on their own to facilitate ASOs' work in Reconciliation.





# THE SEVEN GUIDANCE STEPS





1

step one

# STEP 1

## Complete a preliminary self-education and self-assessment

The Work	The Expected outcome Following Step 1	Examples of Step 1 in Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete the basic work of educating board, staff and peers on the historical context, and the imperative need for Reconciliation. The education process does not end here; this is only the beginning. As an organization moves through its process, further and ongoing education needs will emerge.</li><li>• Reflect on your organization's gaps and challenges and note any accomplishments in Reconciliation process with Indigenous peoples.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Board, staff, peers and volunteers have a basic understanding of the history and the need for Reconciliation.</li><li>• The organization, starting with the board of directors and filtering through to staff, has assessed its key gaps and challenges with respect to partnering with and serving Indigenous people and communities so they can be adapted to become more culturally appropriate and wherever possible, Indigenous-led.</li><li>• The organization has also reflected on and learned from its accomplishments.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• At Elevate NWO, the board of directors completed training and made a commitment to a new process.</li><li>• During the Strategic Planning at PASAN, the board of directors identified the need for change within the organization. They began with training and established a Decolonizing/Anti-Racist Working Group.</li></ul>



2

step two

## STEP 2

### Connect and meet with Indigenous People living with HIV/AIDS and other Indigenous service users and begin cultivating partnerships with Indigenous organizations and Elders/Knowledge Keepers

**Note:** Engaging with Indigenous partners can and must occur at all stages

#### The Work

- Initiate a conversation with Indigenous community organizations, Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS and other affected Indigenous service users, and Elders/Knowledge Keepers to seek advice and rebuild trust. Begin by clarifying which Indigenous partners the ASO would like to engage with and develop a plan regarding how best to engage with each potential partner. The Ontario Ministry of Health has offered as examples of Indigenous partners the following: “Provincial Territorial Organizations (PTOs), Métis Nation of Ontario, urban Indigenous service providers, on reserve Indigenous organizations or Band Councils, local Indigenous communities that are in their region, local Elders, etc.”
- Listen deeply and ensure that partners’ advice is heeded in strategy.
- To seek advice for effectively applying the GIPA/MEPA (Greater and more Meaningful Involvement of People living with HIV and other affected communities) principles when serving Indigenous people. Reflect on the lack of meaningful inclusion and engagement of Indigenous people at all levels of the organization and seek partner input on where a strategy that is similar to the one applied to people living with HIV/AIDS may be appropriate, and where it may be inappropriate.

## STEP 2, OUTCOMES

### The Expected Outcomes Following Step 2

- Meaningful relationships and partnerships are developed over time and viewed as such by Indigenous partners.
- Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS and affected Indigenous service users are included and are meaningfully and appropriately engaged in a manner consistent with GIPA/MEPA (the Greater and more Meaningful Involvement of People living with HIV and other affected communities) or with other validated/recognized engagement strategies.

### A Word of Caution

When you engage with Indigenous communities, be clear about what your goals are in coming together and sitting at the table. Don't expect that they will be as excited about this new partnership as you are, or that your organization will become their priority.

Ensure that you engage Indigenous communities in seeking out Elders/Knowledge Keepers. When "vetting" Elders/Knowledge Keepers, strongly consider having members of the Indigenous communities on the interview panel or even leading the conversation to inquire if their teachings are consistent with the values of harm reduction, sex positivity, and inclusivity of LGBT2Q Indigenous people. For instance, you could ask directly what their teachings are, i.e.: "Can you please tell me what your teachings are around people who use substances attending ceremony?"

## STEP 2, EXAMPLES

### Examples of Step 2 in action

- Scheduling the first meeting with key Indigenous partner organization and continuing to meet, communicating updates and seeking feedback along the way.
- Organizing a focus group with Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS and other Indigenous service users.
- Elevate NWO partners with OAHAS to feast together at each turn of the season. During the feast, an Elder/ Knowledge Keeper is present to give traditional teachings and lead ceremony.
- Gilbert Centre actively participates in two local Pow Wows.
- PASAN partners with local Indigenous organizations and community members to offer weekly a circle in Allan Gardens.
- A few organizations spoke to Indigenous partners about land acknowledgements. They learned that many Indigenous people feel these openings have lost their meaning and indicated they would prefer to see/hear concrete evidence of work, organizational change or sacrifice, or concrete commitments linked to Reconciliation. Other Indigenous partners have said that land acknowledgments should, at the very least, be an opportunity for deeper education, rather than a listing of peoples who shared the land.

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step three

## STEP 3

Board members or advisory group members lead a whole-organization strategy (see Step 4 for options), grounded in an implementation plan

**Note:** This step is meant to happen concurrently and iteratively with Step 2

The Work	The Expected outcome Following Step 3	Examples of Step 3 in Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Board members or advisory group members develop an organizational strategy that includes an implementation plan (linked to as part of the organization's strategic plan) in partnership with Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS, Indigenous service users, Elders/Knowledge Keepers and Indigenous partners.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A clearly detailed strategy (preferably as part of a strategic plan), with a board/advisory group-monitored implementation plan, has been developed in partnership with Indigenous communities, organizations, service users, and/or Elders/Knowledge Keepers.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The AIDS Committee of North Bay and Area's next strategic plan details specific commitments to servicing Indigenous service users, and to broader community relationships/partnerships.</li><li>As a step towards a new strategic plan, the Gilbert Centre's environmental scan will include a review of the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action and will seek input from two local Indigenous organizations: Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle (BANAC), Barrie Native Friendship Centre (BNFC).</li></ul>

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4  
step four

## STEP 4

Organizations complete their work and track their progress (see Step 5), including demonstrating feedback from Indigenous service users and partners

### The Work

- Complete the work required to fulfill the organization's implementation strategy. This can be done by drawing from one or more of the options listed below, depending on your organization type.
- Track progress, including regular feedback from Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS, Indigenous service users and Indigenous partner organizations. Feedback may come to you via Talking Circles at various touch points, during client meetings, or one-on-one meetings with partner agencies. Progress tracking should include feedback about what is going well and what could be improved.

### The Expected outcome Following Step 4

- The strategy has been implemented.
- Progress has been tracked along the way and includes feedback from Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS, other affected Indigenous service users, and Indigenous community partners.

## STEP 4, KNOWLEDGE-SHARING OPTIONS

During Step 4, select the knowledge-sharing option that best fits your organization

### Knowledge-sharing and decision-transfer options

OPTION 1: Share the organization's expertise with Indigenous organizations freely. Organizations with no mandate to serve Indigenous service users would choose Option 1.

OPTION 2: Transform or create programs to be led by or delivered in partnership with Indigenous partners following continuous education and the building.

OPTION 3: Transfer the program funding to Indigenous communities or organizations. Alternatively, complete a purchase of service arrangement with an Indigenous organization or develop an arms-length trusteeship so that the Indigenous organization can operate the program and its funds. Organizations with a mix of Indigenous and non-Indigenous service users (i.e. most organizations in the sector) would choose either **Option 2** and/or **Option 3** with respect to programs meant for Indigenous service users.

OPTION 4: Transform the organization's mandate, by-laws and other formal guiding structures, and staffing to become Indigenous led.

OPTION 5: Transfer all funding to an Indigenous organization who will then provide the service directly. Organizations serving mostly Indigenous service users would choose **Option 4** or **Option 5**.

# STEP 4, EXAMPLES

## Examples of Step 4 in action

- Réseau ACCESS Network and AIDS Committee of North Bay and Area have adopted a strategy to hire Indigenous staff, including pro-active steps regarding job postings.
- Réseau ACCESS Network and Elevate NWO have made traditional medicines available to service users.

### Elevate NOW

- On an ongoing basis, ensures that its staff and board are competent in the 2015 Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action and can explain why it is relevant to its work.
- Elevate NWO sought resources to hire an Elder to work with its clinics in order to provide traditional Elder care medicine and ceremony as part of their clinical services.

### AIDS Committee of North Bay and Area

- Putting its full staff and Board through the San'yas: Indigenous Cultural Safety Training, and, as a first step, the Executive Director completed the training.
- Provides Elder/Knowledge Keeper services to Indigenous service users.
- Recruited Indigenous Board members.

### Réseau ACCESS Network

- Encouraged ongoing education funded using individual staff development budgets.
- Collecting stats on Indigenous service users – through self-identification.

### PASAN

- Supported an Indigenous led community-based research project with Indigenous women living with HIV and has committed to offering programming. Women who participated in the project have been hired as outreach workers supporting other projects.
- OHTN has transferred an Indigenous research support position to OAHAS for work happening in Ontario and rooted in Reconciliation and self-determination principles.
- The PASAN budget allocates money for Elder/Knowledge Keeper support and traditional medicines.
- Asian Community AIDS Services (ACAS) offered Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression training to OAHAS.



step five

# STEP 5

## Report on progress and celebrate interim milestones

### The Work

Sharing/self-reporting of collected data elements, such as:

- For organizations serving Indigenous service users, numbers of Indigenous service users in relation to the population of your region or community - and update those numbers as better data become known through process improvement or research.
- Work to date and expected outcomes for example, what is your Reconciliation work? What options and expected outcomes did you choose?
- Strategy status including the status of the board's strategy on Reconciliation - including outcomes achieved.
- Relationships and partnerships with Indigenous service providers.
- Expenditures including spending on Indigenous programming, and metrics to build partnerships and track their progress.
- Lessons learned and formal training undertaken by staff, board or peers/volunteers.

### The expected outcome(s) following Step 5

- Progress or data elements have been publicly reported annually, preferably semi-annually.

### Examples of Step 5 in action

- An organization reports its budget expenditures and work to date every year during its AGM, within its annual report, and on its website.



step six

## STEP 6

Indigenous partners and service users celebrate your “Moment on the path”: The organization’s achievements have reached a point where it can host a “Reconciliation Day” or “Reconciliation Ceremony”

The Work	The Expected outcome Following Step 6	Examples of Step 6 in Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Indigenous partners, Indigenous people living with HIV/AIDS, and other Indigenous service users acknowledge that the organization has reached a point of significance, a ‘moment on the path’. Only then can the organization organize an open-doors event wherein Indigenous partners and service users/ stakeholders tell stories of success in partnership with the organization.</li><li>• This is a new beginning for organizations engaged in the Reconciliation process.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The organization has hosted a “Reconciliation Day” or “Reconciliation Ceremony”.</li><li>• Indigenous partners have given testimony to your new beginning.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Ontario Association of Children’s Aid Societies – and then a handful of local children’s aid societies – after some years of Reconciliation work, organized open houses, where Indigenous partners gave testimony and there was a commitment to new beginning.</li></ul>



# 7

step seven

# STEP 7

The work continues...

## The Work

- A commitment to continue building programs and relationships in an integrated, collaborative fashion alongside Indigenous partners and service users.

## The Expected outcome Following Step 7

- Continuous iteration of the steps above and strides to improve the work.
- The success of the strategy is demonstrated in program outcomes for Indigenous service users and/or key stakeholders

## Examples of Step 7 in Action

- To be determined by the organization in partnership with Indigenous service users and/or key stakeholders.

# APPENDIX

## Suggested Resources for reference during Step 1: Basic Self-Education

### Background Reading/Viewing

1. Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
2. Honouring the Truth, Reconciling for the Future – Summary of the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
3. What We Have Learned – Principles of Truth and Reconciliation, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
4. The Survivors Speak, A Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada
5. Various reports
6. Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
7. We are all Treaty People (Full book, YouTube: Anishinabek Nation)
8. Education resources from Anishinabek Nation
9. CAAN Best Practices Manual
10. Indigenous Ally Toolkit

### Training

San'yas Indigenous Cultural Safety Training





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