

Sharing and Use of Information and Knowledge from Indigenous Communities

1. Purpose

This policy sets out expectations for how the Canadian Environmental Law Association (CELA) will approach communication and engagement with Indigenous partners related to the use, protection and sharing of Indigenous knowledge. It is also meant to guide decision-making related to the use and sharing of knowledge and information from Indigenous governments, communities, partners, and individuals in the course of its mission-driven work.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all CELA staff, board members, and volunteers who may interact or develop relationships with Indigenous partners while carrying out CELA-related activities. These activities may include, but are not limited to, research, public legal education, law reform campaign development, and legal representation.

3. Policy Statement

As a non-profit legal aid clinic, CELA shares knowledge for public interest purposes and not for commercial gain. In keeping with its commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, CELA recognizes that reconciliation requires long-term learning and reflection, as well as action to address historic and ongoing injustices.

CELA is committed to giving effect to the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). In particular, related to Indigenous knowledge and information sharing, CELA recognizes: Article 31 of UNDRIP affirms Indigenous Peoples' right to “maintain, control, protect and develop” their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and intellectual property; Article 32 affirms the right of Indigenous Peoples to free, prior, and informed consent regarding the development or use of their lands, territories, and other resources.

CELA also acknowledges the value of the OCAP® principles (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) developed by the First Nations Information Governance Centre in guiding our work with Indigenous partners.

4. Guiding Principles

In implementing this policy, CELA will apply the following principles in all interactions with Indigenous partners:

- *Respect* – We respect the inherent rights of Indigenous partners to control and protect their knowledge in our interactions and engagement with them.
- *Consent First* – At the beginning of any initiative or relationship, we will seek consent to share information and accept consent may be denied or modified.
- *Transparency and Accountability on Use* – Consent cannot be gained without first sharing how we intend to use or share information, including how it is tied to our mission, and seeking to

understand any concerns. We will work in good faith to meet those commitments and adjust our practices where appropriate to respond to concerns.

- *Flexibility and Sensitivity* – How we apply our principles will be sensitive and flexible to the needs of the Indigenous partners and the nature of our activities. Indigenous partners may include First Nations Leadership, individuals, businesses, collectives and may have very different needs, concerns and expectations. Our activities may be a stand-alone activity or a long-term project.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

All CELA staff, board members, and volunteers are responsible for understanding and applying this policy in their day-to-day activities, in particular for any event, project or initiative where CELA may seek input or information from Indigenous peoples.

Managers and supervisors are responsible for ensuring team members receive appropriate guidance and support to uphold this policy.

6. Operational Requirements

This policy must be made publicly available on CELA's website. It must also be included in orientation materials for new staff, students, and board members. CELA will acknowledge the existence of this policy wherever and whenever they engage with Indigenous individuals, groups, organizations, communities, and youth.

7. Related Documents

- Case Studies in Indigenous Information Sharing (CELA, 2025)
- How this policy was developed & Definitions of Indigenous Knowledge (CELA, 2025)
- [Commitment to Truth & Reconciliation](#)
- United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
- OCAP® Principles (First Nations Information Governance Centre)

9. Review and Approval

This policy will be reviewed at least every three years, or earlier if required due to changes in organizational structure, funding arrangements, or regulatory requirements.

Approved by: **CELA Board of Directors**

Approval Date: **March 23, 2026**

Next Review: **March 2029**