

INDIGI-X



KANOHI KI TE KANOHI FACE - T O - F A C E

UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS OF AN
IN-PERSON GLOBAL EXCHANGE FOR
INDIGENOUS PROFESSIONALS
AUGUST 2022

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Connecting virtually is an excellent way for Indigenous Professionals to meet, network, and identify opportunities for international trade. However, nothing can replace face-to-face interactions when building new, long-standing relationships between individuals and Nations.

In-person, cross-border exchanges provide Indigenous Professionals with new perspectives, knowledge transfer, and the opportunity to learn more about best practices, all of which they can and will bring back to their own Nations.

INDIGI-X requests the federal governments of Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand to support the development of a pilot, in-person exchange for Indigenous Professionals.



BACKGROUND

INDIGI-X launched its inaugural Virtual Exchange for Indigenous Professionals in June 2020, which was met with resounding success from our network, industry, and the Canadian and New Zealand governments.

Our virtual program continues to be oversubscribed, with a total of three exchanges completed to date and tremendous support for a fourth trilateral exchange between Canada, New Zealand, and Australia planned for September 2022.

Virtual exchanges offer both individual and collective benefits. INDIGI-X has clearly demonstrated that our exchanges provide opportunities for Indigenous professionals to network, build capacity and increase their visibility both nationally and internationally. Several of our alumni have won new contracts and received board appointments as a result of participating in our exchanges.

The next step - offering in-person, Indigenous exchanges - would strengthen our collective economic and professional networks, complement our country's bi-lateral trade agreements, and globally leverage Indigenous ways of knowing to help tackle complex interconnected challenges.



WALKING IN TWO WORLDS CAN BE CHALLENGING...

Indigenous Professionals are not only accountable to western business norms but also to Indigenous laws and cultural practices. We are held to a high level of accountability by our extended families, our communities, and our ancestors.

However, these differences are also a source of strength.

INDIGI-X is a program by Indigenous Professionals, for Indigenous Professionals.

We create space for Indigenous leaders to bring their inherent strengths to the fore, share Indigenous ways of knowing that are grounded in traditional values and knowledges, and celebrate successes together.

By offering exchanges with the appropriate wrap-around supports, we provide our network with new opportunities to learn and grow, thereby strengthening our communities.



ALUMNI PERSPECTIVES

“Making relatives through *whakawhanaungatanga* - a beautiful representation of several nations.”

- Lisa Warbrick, Aotearoa

“I experienced a boost of encouragement and gained global perspective after meeting everyone on this program. I also realised I had more to offer every time we met.”

- Koila Ganilau, Fiji

“Despite the vast distance between our nations, our history, there is determination to succeed as indigenous people, this is the common thread that binds us together, as we all remain hopeful for a brighter future.”

- Ula Macomber, Fiji

“An amazing exchange of ideas and thoughts that were uniquely Indigenous, with a stunning array of amazing high-performing Indigenous professionals from across the world.”

- Vanessa Mountain, Turtle Island

“This exchange encouraged and allowed me to step outside my comfort zone that has not only brought a positive influence in my professional life, but also to my personal life.”

- Keshia Moffat, Turtle Island

“Indigi-X is a forum that will leave you inspired to be your best Indigenous self. It is a forum where you will make connections, generate new ideas and think about the future of indigeneity in a modern world.”

- Rēnata West, Aotearoa

THE BENEFITS OF VIRTUAL EXCHANGES

Virtual Exchanges allow participants to meet each other, form connections, and work together on similar topics that are important and meaningful to them. They provide a platform for Indigenous Professionals to work together, solve issues, and learn from each other's experiences.

Feedback from our participants include:

- Increased exposure from the comfort of their homes.
- Pride in their own heritage and culture.
- Strength in knowing they have the same values and experiences as others.
- Increased personal and professional confidence.
- Assurance in knowing that they have access to a network they can draw on for support.



Building the case for an

IN-PERSON EXCHANGE

Feedback from alumni regarding our Virtual Exchange indicated that 100% of our network would consider an opportunity to attend an in-person exchange. Some of the reasons for this include:

- Transfer of skills and best practices.
- Strengthened networks, nationally and globally.
- Cultural immersion and learning.
- New perspectives and experiences.
- Knowledge transfer and capacity building.

Our network of Indigenous Professionals hold a variety of backgrounds in industry, experience, and life circumstances.

The feedback we have received has been overwhelmingly in support of hosting in-person exchanges once travel restrictions are lifted.



IN-PERSON EXCHANGE

Potential Structures

There are several ways international exchanges could be structured:

Young Professionals

Catering to individuals aged 35 and younger, an in-person, Indigenous-to-Indigenous, international exchange between Canada and New Zealand would expose new graduates to experiences, ways of working, and best practices in another country. Living and working in a new country can build an individual's confidence while also experiencing other Indigenous cultures.

Several universities in both Canada and New Zealand have exchanges for Indigenous students, which have proven to be formative experiences for young people. However, we do not believe these experience should be limited to those who have chosen to attend post-secondary institutions.

Job Swaps

During INDIGI-X's Virtual Exchange, several of our alumni developed strong connections with each other cross-borders. These connections were primarily due to the fact that many of the participants hold similar professional roles in their respective countries.

A job swap may be an opportunity for a large corporate committed to the professional development of Indigenous employees; or, a local, regional or central government agency with an Indigenous focus. A job swap between two similar Indigenous organizations would strengthen ties between businesses, providing new perspectives and knowledge sharing, thereby building capacity and international relationships.

Technical / Industry-Specific Exchanges

There is a clear need for the transfer of skills and specialist knowledge between Indigenous Nations. Developing an exchange whereby individuals in a specific industry could travel to another country and learn best practices would be beneficial, not only for the individual, but for the company and their respective industries.

Clean energy, fisheries, forestry, and tourism are logical industries to start with because they are growing industries for Indigenous Nations in Canada and New Zealand and offer strong potential for cross-border learning.

Contract Placements

Many of our alumni are self-employed and work with industry and/or government stakeholders. INDIGI-X could facilitate the placement of Indigenous Professionals in contract positions internationally, thereby facilitating the introduction of top-quality talent into countries while supporting the exposure of Indigenous Professionals across borders.

These roles could include advisory and board positions, as well as finding roles for Elders and Knowledge-Keepers, as they possess valuable and in-depth knowledge on a global level as well as on a community level.



ENSURING CULTURAL SAFETY

Wrap-around supports are key

Many Indigenous Professionals have not had the opportunity to travel or work abroad, so it is important to ensure that appropriate cultural safety and associated supports available are available to delegates before, during and after the exchange.

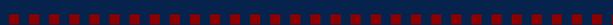
These supports are integral to ensuring a safe and enriching experience for both delegates and their families.

Wrap-around supports such as:

- Ceremony before, during and after the exchange
- Advance trip preparation and virtual connections for delegates and their families to connect them with a network in-country beforehand
- Resident Elders, or having Elders who travel with the delegation, available for support
- Practicalities - such as housing, transport etc - arranged by Indigenous hosts and their communities may provide a sense of comfort for delegates

We also believe Indigenous-to-Indigenous, international exchanges should be led by grassroots, organic, Indigenous organizations.

Organizations, like INDIGI-X, who are supported by communities and who attract like-minded people will provide delegates with the necessary cultural safety and supports that will ultimately lead to an enriching experience for delegates and their families.





RECOMMENDATIONS

INDIGI-X recommends the federal governments in Canada and New Zealand to:

1. Support INDIGI-X in launching a pilot, in-person international exchange for Indigenous Professionals.
2. Ensure government-funded foreign exchange opportunities are inclusive and not limited to one specific demographic of Indigenous people.
3. Support the research and development of an Indigenous Professional Leadership program that will be delivered through experiential learning, exploration, and ceremony.



INDIGI-X

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUR PROGRAM
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