

# **RESEARCH POLICY FRAMEWORK**

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ST. JOHN'S FRIENDSHIP CENTRE  
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Citation	2	<b>SECTION 6 RESEARCH STAGES</b>	<b>25</b>
Copyright	2	Stage 1   Relationship-Building	25
<b>LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>	<b>4</b>	Stage 2   Project Co-Development	26
<b>SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>	Stage 3   Project Execution	28
1.1   Putting Relationships First	5	Stage 4   Project Close-Out	30
1.2   How We Developed the Framework	6	<b>SECTION 7 RESEARCH SPACES</b>	<b>32</b>
1.3   Who Should Use the Framework	6	7.1   External Research Space	32
1.4   How We Apply the Framework	7	7.2   Internal Research Space	32
<b>SECTION 2 RESEARCH STATEMENT</b>	<b>8</b>	7.3   Educational Research Space	33
2.1   Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)	8	7.4   Advisory Research Space	34
2.2   Setting Higher Standards for Research	9	<b>APPENDIX A GLOSSARY</b>	<b>36</b>
2.3   A New Approach to Indigenous Research	9	<b>APPENDIX B BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>40</b>
2.4   When to Apply the Framework	11	<b>APPENDIX C RESEARCHER SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>SECTION 3 GUIDING VALUES</b>	<b>14</b>		
3.1   Respect	14		
3.2   Self-Determination	14		
3.3   Holism	15		
3.4   Collaboration	15		
3.5   Humility	15		
<b>SECTION 4 PRIORITIES AND PARTNERS</b>	<b>16</b>		
4.1   General Research Areas	16		
4.2   First Voice Urban Indigenous Coalition	16		
4.3   Registry of Research Topics	17		
4.4   Formal Research Proposals	17		
4.5   Research Roster	18		
<b>SECTION 5 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA</b>	<b>19</b>		
Part A   Researcher Assessment Criteria	19		
Part B   Project Assessment Criteria	21		



ST. JOHN'S FRIENDSHIP CENTRE  
**LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

First Light respectfully acknowledges the land on which our community gathers as the ancestral homelands of the Beothuk, whose culture has now been lost forever.

We acknowledge the island of Ktaqmkuk (Newfoundland) as the unceded, traditional territory of the Beothuk and the Mi'kmaq. And we acknowledge Labrador as the traditional and ancestral homelands of the Innu of Nitassinan, the Inuit of Nunatsiavut, and the Inuit of NunatuKavut. We recognize all First Peoples who were here before us, those who live with us now, and the seven generations to come.

As First Peoples have done since time immemorial, we strive to be responsible stewards of the land and to respect the cultures, ceremonies, and traditions of all who call it home. As we open our hearts and minds to the past, we commit ourselves to working in a spirit of truth and reconciliation to make a better future for all.

# SECTION 1

## INTRODUCTION

First Light is a registered non-profit organization that serves the urban Indigenous and non Indigenous communities alike by providing programs and services rooted in the revitalization, strengthening, and celebration of Indigenous cultures and languages. As one of three Friendship Centres in Newfoundland and Labrador and one of more than a hundred across Canada, our work is grounded in the spirit of trust, respect, and friendship.

First Light has grown significantly since our organization was established in 1983 as we diversified our operations and expanded our services and programming in order to better serve and advocate alongside the urban Indigenous community in St. John's. In recent years, our work has evolved to include the advancement of systemic change in public policy and promoting our values as a community-based urban Indigenous organization. The pursuit of these broader objectives has often meant engaging more frequently and more deeply with researchers and research institutions. To ensure our continued growth and impact, we have developed the First Light *Research Policy Framework* (the "*Research Policy Framework*" or the "Framework") to govern and guide all such research-focused relationships.

### 1.1 | Putting Relationships First

The *Research Policy Framework* is built on the foundational principle that all research projects that engage the urban Indigenous community should serve to advance reciprocal relationships between researchers and members of the community. It has not always been so. For many years, Indigenous people were seen by researchers as objects of study, rather than as partners with an equal stake in research outcomes. However, in the wake of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples ("RCAP"), a fundamental shift began to take place in the 1990s. The Commission's Final Report, released in 1996, led governments to re-evaluate the place of Indigenous Peoples in Canadian society and to undertake efforts aimed at addressing the widespread impact of colonial systems and mindsets.

*Research is all about unanswered questions, but it also reveals our unquestioned answers.*

—SHAWN WILSON

Although a great deal of research was still being conducted by non-Indigenous researchers, a growing number of government officials and academics were beginning to understand the importance of including Indigenous voices in their work. Collaborative research practices began to emerge and Indigenous scholars were increasingly able to assert their power to change longstanding colonial approaches to Indigenous-focused research. This change was further advanced by an emerging interest in decolonization and anti-colonial practices.<sup>1</sup> As popular awareness about Indigenous histories and cultures began to spread, so too did the understanding that Indigenous Peoples have our own worldviews and the conviction that researchers needed to respect these worldviews through the formulation of Indigenous Research Paradigms (IRPs).

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<sup>1</sup> The decolonization movement was extremely influential for Indigenous researchers, and is best articulated by Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith's book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*.

An IRP helps to advance collaborative research relationships by recognizing that Indigenous people have a much larger role to play beyond setting the research agenda. Indeed, IRPs are used to integrate Indigenous values, beliefs, and customs into every step of the research process. As Shawn Wilson explains, all such IRPs include “a set of underlying beliefs that guide our actions. ... These beliefs include the way that we view reality (ontology), how we think about or know this reality (epistemology), our ethics and morals (axiology) and how we go about gaining more knowledge about reality (methodology).”<sup>2</sup> Whether articulated formally, informally, or not at all, the underlying beliefs that make up an IRP nevertheless influence how we share, seek out, and understand what we know about the world.

IRPs are “Indigenous” in that they reflect the similarities of diverse Indigenous Peoples from around the world. More specifically, they reflect our common experiences of colonialism and our shared worldviews that are rooted in relationality – the concept that we are all related to each other and to the world around us, including the land, animals, and the greater cosmos. The nature of these relationships implies a distinct set of obligations that each of us owes to one another as well as accountability for upholding those obligations. These principles inform the entirety of the First Light *Research Policy Framework*.

## 1.2 | How We Developed the Framework

The process of developing the *Research Policy Framework* engaged a diverse group of people, including First Light staff, the First Voice Urban Indigenous Coalition, members of the urban Indigenous community, and representatives from non-Indigenous stakeholders. Work began with an internal organizational scan, which revealed the myriad ways in which First Light staff regularly participate in, contribute to, and directly conduct research that engages members of the urban Indigenous community. The findings of this scan highlighted the broad range of knowledge sharing activities that we participate in as an organization, thus allowing us to define research in a way that reflects our day-to-day reality.

In addition, interviews with Board members, the Senior Leadership Team, and program coordinators were essential to creating a clear picture of our organization’s needs, potential, strengths, and challenges with respect to research. An external scan of like-minded organizations then followed, including Friendship Centres and provincial associations in Canada, along with interviews with relevant officials at Memorial University. Existing Indigenous research frameworks and policies were also considered and a literature review was conducted. A complete list of these all such documents that were consulted in the development of our Framework can be found in Appendix B.

Lastly, an independent Indigenous researcher was engaged to complete an external review of the draft *Research Policy Framework* before it was finalized and approved by First Light’s Senior Leadership Team.

## 1.3 | Who Should Use the Framework

The *Research Policy Framework* is designed to govern and guide all research relationships involving First Light. This includes:

- Members of the urban Indigenous community involved in any First Light research partnerships.
- First Light staff, volunteers, and board members who may be involved in research partnerships connected to our organization.
- Researchers, including faculty, graduate students, and research groups.

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<sup>2</sup> Wilson, p. 13.

- Students completing course or program requirements, such as community-based coursework, co-op positions, internships, theses, and dissertations.
- Ethics committees that oversee and advise researchers pursuing research relationships with First Light and/or the urban Indigenous community in St. John's.
- Government agencies, non-profits, and community organizations seeking our participation in or support for any new or ongoing research project or advisory committee.
- Anyone else, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, who will be involved in a research partnership with First Light.

## 1.4 | How We Apply the Framework

While intended as an overall statement about the ways in which First Light will – and will not – engage in research, First Light recognizes that the *Research Policy Framework* must be able to function as an organic document that is both flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances.

For this reason, we have established a **Research Governance Committee** that is charged with enforcing, reviewing, and updating the *Research Policy Framework* as needed. The Committee is chaired by First Light's designated Research Lead and includes the following additional members:

- First Light's Senior Leadership Team;
- Up to two members of First Light's Board of Directors; and
- Up to two First Voice Community Advocates.

Meeting on a quarterly basis, the Committee is also responsible for reviewing and evaluating all formal research proposals that may be submitted to First Light for consideration.

Research allows First Light to better understand and respond to the ever changing and dynamic needs of the urban Indigenous community. Unfortunately, research has a long colonial history that has negatively impacted Indigenous Peoples. Eurocentric research has been used to further colonization and the oppression of Indigenous Peoples, and we have long been accustomed to research about us rather than for us, which means the community has often considered findings to be irrelevant. Moreover, research that has been designed outside the community has frequently tended to focus on negative aspects of urban Indigenous life, which in turn creates negative stereotypes about Indigenous people. However, a new paradigm is emerging as global momentum to recognize the inherent rights of Indigenous Peoples challenges conventional ideas about what research is and what it can be.

## **2.1 | Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC)**

Research is beginning to change as institutions and researchers work to apply the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP),<sup>3</sup> much of which turns upon the spirit of Article 19 and the standard of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC).

*States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the Indigenous Peoples concerned through their own representative institutions in order to obtain their free, prior and informed consent [FPIC] before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative measures that may affect them.*

—Article 19, UNDRIP

In research, the FPIC standard affirms the Indigenous right to self-determination while also recognizing the imperative to dismantle colonial research practices that have been used to maintain power imbalances and oppressive discourses. Despite the emphasis on the responsibilities of states, many organizations have begun to adopt the FPIC standard as they work to build deeper and more meaningful relationships with Indigenous Peoples.<sup>4</sup> The FPIC standard goes well beyond the “duty to consult,” which is often treated by non-Indigenous researchers especially as merely one box to check among many others.

As an Indigenous organization that works with and advocates alongside the urban Indigenous community, First Light’s expectation is that we be engaged as a rightsholder rather than simply as a stakeholder. We are committed to supporting research that benefits the urban Indigenous community, that safeguards the ongoing and informed consent of participants, and that protects the community’s right to assert its sovereignty over all data that is collected from its members. Conversely, we will not participate in or support research that does not address a community-identified need, that seeks to extract data from or otherwise exploit community members, or that perpetuates colonial ideas.

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<sup>3</sup> The full text of the UN Declaration can be found online at [https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS\\_en.pdf](https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, the University of Manitoba’s Framework for Research Engagement with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Peoples, available at [https://umanitoba.ca/faculties/health\\_sciences/medicine/media/UofM\\_Framework\\_Report\\_web.pdf](https://umanitoba.ca/faculties/health_sciences/medicine/media/UofM_Framework_Report_web.pdf).



## 2.2 | Setting Higher Standards for Research

Some organizations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, have already adopted research frameworks and policy statements that have helped shape First Light’s own approach to research. Setting the standard for Canadian academic institutions, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) – known collectively as the Tri Council agencies – have formulated the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2).<sup>5</sup> Focusing on research that involves First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples, Chapter 9 of TCPS2 serves as a general framework for the ethical conduct of research involving Indigenous people and communities by promoting research that is grounded in respectful relationships and meaningful collaboration between researchers and Indigenous participants. Adhering fully to TCPS2 is mandatory for any organization that receives research funding from any of the Tri-Council agencies.

Rather than seeking to provide a comprehensive set of requirements for researchers to engage with Indigenous people and communities in an ethical way, however, Chapter 9 of TCPS2 is meant as a minimum ethical baseline for such projects in the absence of any other advice to researchers. For this reason, “it is not intended to override or replace ethical guidance offered by Indigenous Peoples themselves. Its purpose is to ensure, to the extent possible, that research involving Indigenous Peoples is premised on respectful relationships.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, Chapter 9 of TCPS2 is meant to complement – and, where appropriate, inform – the application of Indigenous-created ethical codes and frameworks wherever these exist.

One such ethical code encompasses the widely regarded principles of OCAP® (ownership, control, access, and possession).<sup>7</sup> Developed by the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) as an approach to the governance of data management practices, OCAP® addresses the issue of data sovereignty as an explicit response to “tenacious colonial approaches to research and information management” by institutions such as universities and government.<sup>8</sup> While the OCAP® principles represent a framework to support self-determination of research and information management, it is essential to recognize that OCAP® is First Nations developed and focused; it is not intended to represent Inuit or Métis principles regarding research and data sovereignty. Having said that, the principles are nevertheless consistent with the spirit and values of Inuit and Métis efforts to address data sovereignty and information management.<sup>9</sup> As such, OCAP® has helped to inform the approach, structure, and content of the First Light *Research Policy Framework* where appropriate.

## 2.3 | A New Approach to Indigenous Research

As an alternative to the more traditional academic approach, the First Light *Research Policy Framework* was developed to promote more meaningful, **community-driven research**. In the past research would be done for or about the community, conducted on its behalf by an “expert.” The research agenda would be set by others, and the data generated would reflect the perspective of the researchers. Community-driven research, by contrast, reshapes systems of power and creates lasting change. By centring the perspectives of the community, the data and information that shapes policy- and decision-making is transformed; it recognizes that community members are the experts on their own lived realities.

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5 See [https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique\\_tcps2-eptc2\\_2018.html](https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique_tcps2-eptc2_2018.html)

6 Ibid.

7 See <https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/>.

8 Schnarch, p. 80.

9 Examples include the Manitoba Métis Federation OCAS principles and the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami Strategy on Research.

Community-driven research is based on collaboration and places urban Indigenous people at the centre of any research project. It transforms methodologies by respecting and prioritizing the experiences, values, skills, and knowledge of the community through every step of the research process. Successful community-driven research guarantees that any research project or assessment activity contributes wholly to the support and well-being of the urban Indigenous community. Even more, it creates innovative and lasting solutions.

The First Light *Research Policy Framework* will guide our organization's participation in any research that engages members of the urban Indigenous community or First Light staff. It was designed to ensure that every aspect of the research process is enacted in a meaningful way according to our values of respect, self-determination, holism, collaboration, and humility.<sup>10</sup> To further this purpose the Framework was developed to:

- **Promote our values.** As First Light continues to respond to a growing number of research requests, the Framework will allow us to engage with research in a manner that upholds our values. To participate in good research, we must ensure the well-being of the urban Indigenous community, assert our right to self-determination, and amplify our voices and vision for the future.
- **Protect our resources.** As a friendship centre, it is First Light's purpose to serve, support, and advocate alongside the urban Indigenous community. Despite the value of research in advancing this purpose, its pursuit must not detract from day-to-day operations. Research is resource intensive – it requires time, capacity, and funding. All participation in research must respect these limitations, provide a reciprocal exchange of resources, and must not negatively impact the delivery of services and programming.
- **Safeguard data sovereignty.** First Light serves, supports, and works alongside diverse groups of Indigenous Peoples who have inherent and constitutionally protected rights. These rights include sovereignty over any and all data that is collected during the research process. The Framework ensures that the First Nations Principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP®) of all relevant data are consistently upheld.
- **Foster community engagement.** By creating research practices and building research skills among the urban Indigenous community we can foster a renewed interest and trust in the research process, and engage a new generation of Indigenous researchers.
- **Create internal capacity.** The Framework is designed to improve internal research practices, and build research skills and autonomy within our organization. By enhancing internal capacity, we improve our ability to pursue diverse research opportunities. The framework will allow us to make informed decisions to ensure we benefit from the research process.
- **Guide external researchers.** The Framework provides clear guidelines to any potential research partners interested in pursuing meaningful collaboration with our organization.
- **Screen research partners.** The Framework helps us to determine if potential research partners are good research allies. A good researcher recognizes the importance of building long-term relationships with First Light and with members of the urban Indigenous community. Doing so requires a commitment to collaborate meaningfully through principled partnership, ethical cooperation, and respect for Indigenous knowledge and practices through every step of the research process.

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<sup>10</sup> See SECTION 3: GUIDING VALUES below.

## 2.4 | When to Apply the Framework

The First Light *Research Policy Framework* was designed to be applied by members of staff in all instances of their participation in research as defined by this Framework. Using the following three essential criteria, the Framework defines research in broad terms so as to encompass [1] any intentional collection or creation of knowledge; that is [2] done by engaging members of First Light staff and/or the urban Indigenous community through First Light; for the purposes of [3] transmitting such knowledge to other parties. Furthermore, research may be conducted [4] either within or outside the academy; and [5] in both formal and informal ways.

*Research is any intentional collection or creation of knowledge that is done by engaging members of First Light staff and/or the urban Indigenous community for the purposes of transmitting such knowledge to other parties.*

To provide guidance to First Light staff in applying – and prospective research partners in respecting – this Framework’s *definition of research*, the above criteria and additional elements are described in further detail below.

1. Research is any intentional collection or creation of knowledge. Some examples that **would be** captured by this criterion include the following:
  - Roundtable discussions and focus groups;
  - Community or staff engagement sessions;
  - One-on-one interviews;
  - Internal or external collaboration;
  - Surveys and questionnaires; and/or
  - Observation.

Some examples that **would not be** captured by this criterion include the following:

- Personal conversations;
  - Programming delivered by First Light or other community organizations;
  - Conferences; and/or
  - Training or other forms of professional development.
2. Research involves engaging members of First Light staff and/or the urban Indigenous community through First Light. Some examples that **would be** captured by this criterion include the following:
    - Advising a company or corporate entity;
    - Representing First Light or the urban Indigenous community on a committee;
    - Putting up a poster in the office;
    - Sharing posts through First Light’s social media accounts; and/or
    - Sending out information using First Light’s email distribution lists.

Some examples that **would not** be captured by this criterion include the following:

- Asking a co-worker their views on current events;
- Participating in First Light programming; and/or
- Events that are attended by, but not organized with the assistance of, First Light staff.

3. Research is done for the purposes of transmitting knowledge to other parties. Some examples that **would be** captured by this criterion include the following:

- Reports or research papers;
- Documentaries;
- Presentations;
- Information sharing platforms; and/or
- Artistic works, such as plays, novels, or other productions.

Some examples that **would not be** captured by this criterion include the following:

- Emails or phone calls;
- Business meetings; and/or
- Media interviews.<sup>11</sup>

All three of the above criteria must be met in order for this *Research Policy Framework* to be engaged. Projects or activities that meet only one or two of the above criteria do not qualify as research for the purposes of applying this Framework. Should it be unclear whether a proposed project or activity meets all three criteria, staff and/or external researchers are advised to engage First Light's designated Research Lead to make a determination.

Furthermore, in determining whether this Framework applies, the following additional elements should also be considered:

4. **Research includes projects and activities regardless of whether they take place inside or outside the academy.** In many cases, research projects are led by academics with the support of a post-secondary institution. These kinds of projects tend to be initiated and developed independently of First Light and often involve engaging members of the urban Indigenous community to solicit their feedback on public programs and services, such as healthcare, education, etc. However, community organizations may also initiate their own community-driven research projects that are conducted independently of any post-secondary institution or other research organization. For example, First Light may decide to undertake an independent research project of its own to assess community needs. In such cases, the *Research Policy Framework* would still apply provided criteria 1, 2, and 3 are met.
5. **Research may be conducted in both formal and informal ways.** Formal research projects are typically highly structured, with a clearly organized research team that has access to funding and employs an explicit methodology to study a topic and/or answer a specific question. These kinds of projects usually result in a written report detailing key findings and/or identifying further research questions

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<sup>11</sup> While technically meeting the definition of knowledge transmission, media interviews have been excluded from engaging the Framework for practical reasons.

to be pursued in the future. By contrast, informal research projects tend to use much less structured methodologies, such as casual conversations, to collect data. Such projects may or may not have access to funding support, and their findings generally will not apply beyond those who participated directly in the project. Projects and activities may sometimes use a combination of both formal and informal approaches to research.

In pursuing relationships with external partners, including researchers and research institutions, First Light is guided by five community-defined values: **respect, self-determination, holism, collaboration, and humility**.<sup>12</sup> Our values are tightly connected, as though forming a circle without any hierarchy: all values are equal and interrelated, and they blend into and support one another. The foundation for creating and maintaining ethical relationships, our Guiding Values are an essential component of the First Light *Research Policy Framework*. For this reason, all researchers who plan to engage with First Light and/or the urban Indigenous community are expected to uphold our values throughout the entire research process. For non Indigenous researchers especially, doing so will often require a willingness to go beyond the more traditional academic methods that are typically used to conduct research.

### 3.1 | Respect

*Respect is a process of honouring the land, the waters, and all the peoples and cultures who inhabit it, including Indigenous knowledge and teachings.*

Respect is the foundation for all interactions that take place in a research relationship. Respect must move beyond superficial adherence to cultural protocols and extend to all levels of interconnection, from our experiences and knowledges to our relationship to the land, waters, and one another. The researcher must respect that we, First Light and the urban Indigenous community, are the experts of our research needs and our experiences. The researcher must accept that entering into a research relationship requires that they disrupt colonial research practices by respecting the experiences, values, skills, and knowledges of the community through every step of the research process.

### 3.2 | Self-Determination

*Self-Determination is an affirmation of the inherent right of all Indigenous Peoples to determine their own futures and to participate fully and actively in all decisions that affect them.*

Self-determination is the value that will allow First Light and the urban Indigenous community to realize our vision for the future. We exercise our inherent right to self-determination through the community pursuit of community-identified research needs, creating the knowledge that we need to implement solutions we developed. The value of self-determination requires the researcher to address the problematic legacy of colonial research practices. They must reject all concepts of hierarchy in the research relationship; they are not the experts of our lived reality, and they cannot speak for us. Instead they must speak with us, supporting the articulation of our research needs and findings. Every step of the research process must uphold the value of self-determination by fostering a positive relationship with research and increasing our capacity to pursue it.

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<sup>12</sup> These values were defined over the course of several sessions, held between November 2019 and February 2020, during the formation of the First Voice Urban Indigenous Coalition. The sessions brought together First Light staff, members of the urban Indigenous community, and representatives from non-Indigenous stakeholders.

### 3.3 | Holism

*Holism is a recognition of the essential interconnectedness of all things and a striving for balance and harmony with respect to the mind, body, and spirit.*

Holism recognizes the interconnection and balance between all things, including knowledge. Upholding the value of holism will ensure that First Light only enters into reciprocal research relationships. Reciprocity in research includes the two-way transmission of knowledge and a balanced input and output of resources. In order to balance the demands that research places on First Light and the urban Indigenous community, every step of the research process must provide a return, whether it is through improved capacity or the promotion of community well being. Achieving a balanced transmission of these different knowledges means that the researcher must be willing to question their understanding of and relationship to research. Indigenous and non-Indigenous thought exist simultaneously, and knowledge may be created in intuitive and subjective spaces. In fact, there is no objectivity in research, and the researcher must be able to recognize that who they are and their intentions as a researcher are inseparable from every aspect of the research process, from question to outcome.

### 3.4 | Collaboration

*Collaboration is a commitment to include all voices and perspectives and to work together in an open and transparent way.*

Research cannot be community-driven if it is not fundamentally collaborative. All research projects involving First Light and the urban Indigenous community must be equally advantageous for both the community and the researcher. We must be approached as partners with an equal stake in the research process and outcome. Collaborative research practices challenge colonial approaches to research by prioritizing participation of the Indigenous community from the development of the research question to the dissemination of research findings. The researcher must approach collaborative research with the intention of integrating Indigenous values, beliefs, and knowledges into every step of the research process. This will only be accomplished through respectful recognition of the different paths of knowledge creation and transmission.

### 3.5 | Humility

*Humility is a willingness to trust, engage with, and learn from those with diverse experiences and perspectives.*

All of the values are interrelated, and it is through consideration of humility that we may see this interconnection in action. Any researcher seeking to enter a research relationship with First Light and the urban Indigenous community must be able to exercise humility. It takes humility to respect us as the experts of our lived experiences, informed by diverse knowledges of equal measure and merit to that of the dominant research paradigms. It takes humility to pursue a research relationship that supports our inherent right to self-determination, which requires the researcher to unlearn colonial research practices. It takes humility for a researcher to question their understanding of and relationship to research, and to recognize that they are inseparable from every aspect of the research process. It takes humility to enter into a collaborative research relationship as an equal and to strive for the integration of Indigenous values, beliefs, and knowledges into every step of the research process. Without humility it is impossible to reject dominant discourses, embrace new ways of thinking, and to walk the path of a good research relationship.



## SECTION 4

# PRIORITIES AND PARTNERS

The social, cultural, economic, and political context of the urban Indigenous community in St. John's is not the same as it is for other communities across the country, or even across the province. This means that some research topics will be more relevant than others to First Light and the urban Indigenous community. In addition, First Light does not have an infinite capacity to support every research project that is proposed to us, however well formulated they may be. For both of these reasons, our organization must be selective in when, how, and with whom we participate in research in order to maximize the impact of the limited time and resources that we have available to invest in such projects.

To achieve this overall objective, First Light has put in place a set of processes to help prioritize research projects that matter most to our organization and to the St. John's urban Indigenous community. These processes include the identification of general research areas, the work of First Voice and its Action Circles,<sup>13</sup> the feedback that First Light receives directly from the community as a service provider, and the careful management of new and existing relationships with research partners.

### 4.1 | General Research Areas

First Light is committed to supporting research projects that advance truth and reconciliation and that build the capacity of our organization and the urban Indigenous community in St. John's. Consideration will be given to projects that address any of the following general research areas:

- One or more of the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC); the Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG); and/or the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
- Research that may benefit First Light from an organizational or operational standpoint, such as assessment or evaluation projects that measure the efficiency, impact, and/or policies that affect our operations and/or our ability to serve the urban Indigenous community.

### 4.2 | First Voice Urban Indigenous Coalition

Launched in 2019 by First Light in collaboration with Indigenous Services Canada, First Voice is a coalition of Indigenous Peoples, service providers, and all levels of government working together to advance truth and reconciliation in St. John's. The coalition is led by the First Voice Partnership Table, a board-like group that comprises organizational Partners and independent Community Advocates.<sup>14</sup>

The Partnership Table serves as the coalition's strategic decision-making body. At its own discretion the Partnership Table may convene Action Circles bringing together like-minded individuals and organizations to advance focused work on First Voice's 42 Calls for Change as described in the coalition's comprehensive Community Action Plan, released in February 2023.<sup>15</sup> Action Circles are not meant to be Standing

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<sup>13</sup> See the First Voice Coalition Charter. Available online at [firstvoicenl.ca](http://firstvoicenl.ca).

<sup>14</sup> See [firstvoicenl.ca/about/](http://firstvoicenl.ca/about/).

<sup>15</sup> See Our Shared Vision: A Path toward Truth and Reconciliation in St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, 2023- 33; an Urban Indigenous Community Action Plan (February 2023). ISBN 978-1-7387971-1-0.



Committees. Rather, they allow First Voice members to offer input and expertise where they see fit and to lead and coordinate action to advance systemic change.

Action Circles may be convened in any of the following Action Areas:

1. Education, Training, and Employment;
2. Housing and Homelessness;
3. Infrastructure and Service Delivery; and
4. Justice and Human rights

The specific Calls for Change that fall within each of these four Action Areas are identified in the Community Action Plan. Work to advance these Calls will be pursued into 2033 and beyond, with many having associated research components. In collaboration with our Partners in First Voice, First Light will prioritize research projects that help to advance one or more Calls for Change that are set out in the Community Action Plan, and particularly those where work is already underway through existing Action Circles.

### 4.3 | Registry of Research Topics

To assist prospective research partners who may be interested in pursuing a research relationship with our organization, First Light has established a priority list of research questions and topic areas known as the **Registry of Research Topics**. Informed by the *First Voice Calls for Change* and the general research areas identified in Section 4.1 above, the Registry is managed and maintained by the Research Governance Committee. The Registry is used to guide the development of more focused research questions in partnership with external organizations and independent researchers.

It is important to note, however, that not all proposed research projects that are in line with the Registry will necessarily be pursued. Instead, approval is based on the following factors:

- the Assessment Criteria as outlined in Section 5 of this Framework;
- the internal capacity of First Light to pursue the research project;
- the current and immediate needs of the community.

First Light may also consider other research topics even if they are not specifically listed in the Registry. In all cases, it is expected that specific research questions will be negotiated between First Light's designated Research Lead and those proposing projects or activities that engage this Framework.

### 4.4 | Formal Research Proposals

For prospective research partnerships that are particularly complex in either scope or scale, First Light's designated Research Lead may require that a formal research proposal be submitted to the Research Governance Committee for review and evaluation.

In such cases, it is expected that First Light will be engaged at the outset of Stage 2 of the research process, which is to say before the development of more focused research questions and methods. The same approach is strongly recommended for any projects that will require the submission of formal funding applications to third parties, such as government departments or the Tri-Council funding agencies. First Light staff will then work with the prospective research partner to complete Steps 1 through 4 of Stage 2 of the research process in order to develop a formal proposal for submission to the Committee. More information on these processes can be found in *SECTION 6: RESEARCH STAGES*.

Formal proposals must be received by the Research Governance Committee at least three weeks prior to its regularly scheduled quarterly meeting. Proposals will either be approved, approved with conditions, or rejected. When reviewing the research proposals, the Committee will consider the *Research Policy Framework*, the Registry of Research Topics, and any other relevant documentation concerning First Light’s internal operations and capacity. The Committee will render its decision in writing within three weeks following the meeting at which the proposal is considered.

#### 4.5 | Research Roster

It is crucial that all research partnerships be pursued in a way that is mutually beneficial to researchers, members of the urban Indigenous community, and First Light as an organization. For this reason, First Light maintains an internal *Research Roster* in order to ensure that all researchers who engage with members of staff and/or members of the urban Indigenous community through our organization respect and uphold our Guiding Values. The Roster is a pre-approved list of researchers who have made a commitment to build reciprocal relationships by engaging with Indigenous people in a good way. As such, First Light is equally committed to supporting research relationships with those who are listed on the Roster.

Individuals and organizations that have met the screening criteria for prospective research partners as set out in Part A of *SECTION 5: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA* may be added to the *Research Roster*. While First Light’s designated Research Lead may approve new researchers to be added to the Roster as soon as they have met the appropriate criteria, the Research Governance Committee may also remove any researchers who have failed to uphold their responsibilities under an applicable Joint Research Agreement and/or who are found by the Committee to have violated First Light’s Code of Conduct for Researchers.

In order for post-secondary students to participate in research with First Light as part of their course or program requirements within the Educational Research Space described in Section 7 of the Framework, they must be carrying out their work under an academic supervisor who is already listed on the *Research Roster*.

## SECTION 5

# ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

The Assessment Criteria listed in this Section are used to determine whether or to what extent First Light is willing and able to enter into a proposed research relationship. There are two sets of Assessment Criteria that are to be applied in the first two Stages of the research process. The first set of criteria is used to assess prospective research partners and is applied at Stage 1: Relationship Building. The second set of criteria is used to assess proposed research projects and activities and is applied at Stage 2: Project Co-development. Full details are described in [SECTION 6: RESEARCH STAGES](#).

The Assessment Criteria are meant to be flexible. Their application may depend on various factors, such as the scope of the research (e.g. the size of the study population or the number of variables being considered), the complexity of the research topic or question, or other circumstances that may impact the research as deemed applicable by First Light's designated Research Lead. For example, the criteria for a large, multicentre study with a complex research question may well need to be more stringent than the criteria for a small, single-site study with a more straightforward research question.

First Light's designated Research Lead is responsible for identifying and considering these factors when determining the appropriate criteria to apply to proposed research projects and activities. They may need to be flexible and adjust the criteria based on the specific circumstances of the research. The designated Research Lead may engage the Research Governance Committee for more complex projects, where the scope or nature of the research may require additional oversight and coordination. Similarly, a project that involves sensitive or controversial research topics may also require more direct involvement of members of the Research Governance Committee to ensure that the research is conducted in an ethical and transparent manner.

### Part A | Researcher Assessment Criteria

The following criteria are to be applied during Stage 1: Relationship-Building. If the researcher is already listed on the [Research Roster](#) then the Part A criteria may be skipped.

#### A1. Does the researcher have a good understanding of urban Indigenous people?

It is important that the researcher understands and values the lived experiences as well as the social and cultural realities of the urban Indigenous community. A researcher who is prepared to work with our community will have completed appropriate cultural diversity training. While completion of First Light's own course of training<sup>16</sup> is preferred, equivalencies are also acceptable.

**This criterion may be assessed by asking the following questions:**

- Has the researcher completed equivalent training through other urban Indigenous organizations?
- Has the researcher completed relevant undergraduate and/or graduate coursework?
- Does the researcher have prior experience working with urban Indigenous people?
- Does the researcher have the recommendation of a respected member of the urban Indigenous community?
- Does the researcher have lived experience?

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<sup>16</sup> See [firstlightnl.ca/program/training/](http://firstlightnl.ca/program/training/).

## **A2. Is the researcher familiar with community-driven research and Indigenous research practices and methodologies?**

Research methodologies must be respectful of Indigenous knowledges and community dynamics. They should be decolonized, participatory, and community based. This is something that can be learned, and a researcher who is interested in working with First Light and the urban Indigenous community must demonstrate awareness and understanding of essential principles and concepts, such as community-driven research, decolonization, and Indigenization.

**This criterion may be assessed by asking the following questions:**

- Is the researcher familiar with the First Light *Research Policy Framework*?
- Is the researcher familiar with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), with emphasis on Chapter 9, Research Involving First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada
- Is the researcher familiar with the principles of OCAP® and data sovereignty?
- Has the researcher taken any relevant theory and method courses?
- Is the researcher familiar with the work of Indigenous scholars that focus on decolonization and Indigenization of theory and method? Can they name any authors they are familiar with and have influenced them?

## **A3. Is the researcher able to demonstrate cultural humility and a commitment to the Framework's Guiding Values?**

Cultural humility is essential to carrying out research in a decolonized way. For this reason, it is necessary that a researcher who intends to partner with First Light and/or engage with the urban Indigenous community be able to demonstrate an openness to ask questions and to admit that they may need to take time to learn about the community's histories, cultures, values, and priorities.

**This criterion may be assessed by asking the following questions:**

- Has the researcher completed the Self-Assessment Questionnaire?<sup>17</sup>
- Is the researcher involved in activities or organizations that require cross-cultural communication?

## **A4. Does the researcher have the full support of a competent organization?**

If the researcher intends to carry out their research activities in an official capacity with a particular organization, they must have the full support of that organization. Further, that organization's objectives and values must not conflict with those of First Light. If the researcher passes all assessment criteria but the values of the organization conflict with First Light then a research relationship cannot be pursued. This **does not** apply to researchers operating independently; however their suitability as a research partner may be further confirmed through a similar assessment of past affiliations.

**This criterion may be assessed by asking the following questions:**

- Can the researcher provide proof of support from a competent organization? This may be provided through a letter, email, or phone call.

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<sup>17</sup> See Appendix C below.

- Has the organization worked with First Light in the past and was it a positive experience?
- If the organization has never worked with First Light, are their values in line with our own? This may be verified by checking their website for a strategic plan, or a vision, mission and/or statement of principles.

## **Part B | Project Assessment Criteria**

These criteria should be applied to all projects proposed in Stage 2: Project Co-Development.

### **B1. Does the research question address a community-identified need?**

The research question must address a community-identified need as indicated in the Registry of Research Topics. Subject to approval by the First Light Research Governance Committee, research questions may also be considered if they will advance broader Indigenous issues or impact First Light’s operations.

**This criterion may be assessed by asking the following questions:**

- Is the research question related to one or more areas outlined in the Registry of Research Topics?
- Does the research question serve to advance action related to at least one of the 42 Calls for Change included in the First Voice Community Action Plan? If so, has an Action Circle already been established to advance the related Call(s) for Change?
- Does the research question address at least one of the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)?
- Does the research question address at least one of the 231 Calls for Justice of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)?
- Is the research question an assessment, evaluation, or research project that measures the efficiency, impact, or policies related to First Light’s operations and ability to serve the urban Indigenous community?
- Was First Light approached by an external community organization to support, participate in, or advise on a research project with an Indigenous component?<sup>18</sup>

### **B2. Is the project developed in a way that reflects the local context of the urban Indigenous community in St. John’s?**

In order for a research proposal to be approved, the research methods need to demonstrate an understanding of the dynamics of the urban Indigenous community in St. John’s. The diversity and cultural complexity of urban Indigenous identities must be reflected in the research project.

**This criterion may be assessed by asking the following questions:**

- Does the proposal indicate that the researcher understands the different ways in which one may identify as “urban Indigenous,” including the complex layers that exist within such an identity?
- Does the proposal indicate that the researcher understands the diversity and differences of the Innu, Inuit, and Mi’kmaq?
- Does the proposal take into consideration the rhythms of urban Indigenous peoples? Does it identify in its project timeline or schedule seasonal barriers that may make it difficult to work with different demographics of the urban Indigenous community?

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<sup>18</sup> Refer to the Research Spaces described in SECTION 7: RESEARCH SPACES below.

### **B3. Is community participation deliberately included in each step of the research process?**

Collaboration is a guiding value of the Framework and is essential to community-driven research. For this reason, members of the community are expected to be involved in every step of the research process, from the development of the research question to sharing the final results of the project. It is also crucial to manage any real or perceived conflict of interest, be it an established relationship between researcher and participants/community members or researcher and staff.

**This criterion may be assessed by asking the following questions:**

- Does the research project clearly specify the nature and extent of participation by First Light and the urban Indigenous community?
- Will participants be provided with meaningful and appropriate opportunities to have their perspectives heard throughout all Stages of the research process?
- Will the community have the opportunity to share their expertise in the interpretation of data and validation of the results?
- How will the community be involved in the co-creation, co-authoring, and sharing of the knowledge created through the research project?
- Is the research at risk of being biased as a result of previous relationships, research or connection in the community? If so, is there a plan to mitigate these risks?

### **B4. Will the project benefit the urban Indigenous community throughout the research process?**

Every Stage of the research process requiring participation by First Light or the urban Indigenous community must provide a reciprocal benefit to our organization or the community. The knowledge generated in each Stage of the project must be practical and relevant to the community.

**This criterion may be assessed by asking the following questions:**

- Will the project include activities that strengthen the community, either by fostering connection or through skill-building and learning opportunities?
- Will the project hire and train Indigenous research assistants from within the urban Indigenous community?
- Will the project help to foster a new generation of Indigenous researchers?

### **B5. Does the project respect and support the capacity of First Light?**

Research is resource intensive: it requires time, personnel, capacity, and funds. The pursuit of research must not have a negative impact on First Light's operations. Our organizational priority is to provide the urban Indigenous community with necessary and beneficial programming and services. Participation in research cannot interfere with this priority; all research projects must be designed to offset any impact on First Light's capacity.

**This criterion may be assessed by asking the following questions:**

- Is the researcher approaching First Light at the very beginning of the research project?
- Are the objectives clear and easy to understand?
- Is the project well resourced?

- Is there a plan for follow-up? Follow-up is necessary when First Light supports, participates in, or advises on an external research project or committee. Follow-up may also be necessary if the successful implementation of a research project’s findings requires ongoing assessment, evaluation, or support.
- Have project timelines been established, are they flexible, and are they realistic and clearly communicated?
- Does the project make use of the skills and capacity that already exist at First Light?
- Does the project support or improve the skills and capacity at First Light? This may be accomplished by:
  - allocating funds to hire community research assistants and/or to create internships;
  - including workshops or training to strengthen internal research capacity; and/or
  - developing and expanding First Light’s in-house expertise.

**B6. Are members of the urban Indigenous community able to participate in the research project in a safe and ethical way?**

The pursuit of research must never cause harm. In the event that a project meets community identified priorities but involves difficult or triggering subjects, all possible measures must be taken to ensure the well-being and safety of participants is protected. It is essential that re traumatization be prevented whenever possible.

**This criterion may be assessed by asking the following questions:**

- Will access to support and healing services be available before, during, and after the project?
- Are support and healing services socially and culturally appropriate to each individual participant?
- Were these services determined by First Light and the participants? First Light and the participants should be consulted on the kinds of services that may be needed, and the recommendations implemented.

**B7. Is the right to free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) of all participants protected?**

First Light and the urban Indigenous community must be able to retain ownership and control over any experiences and knowledge that is shared in the research process. This means that consent must meet UNDRIP’s FPIC standard and may be withdrawn by anyone at any time in the research process.

**This criterion may be assessed by asking the following questions:**

- Are all consent forms clear, complete, accurate, and easy to understand?
- Are translation of written materials and/or interpretation of verbal communications available if necessary?
- Are oral explanations available if necessary?
- Is the right to withdraw individual and collective consent clearly stated and explained to participants?

**B8. Is the intellectual property of participants protected?**

Both First Light as a community organization and individual members of the urban Indigenous community must be able to retain ownership, control, access, and possession of the knowledge that is created, collected, and shared throughout every step of the research process. This basic principle must be agreed upon in the preliminary stages of the project and be explicitly included in any joint research agreement.

**This criterion may be assessed by asking the following questions:**

- Does the project adhere to the principles of OCAP®?
- What are the expectations for data use and retention and/or the intellectual property rights of the research results?
- Does the researcher see the research findings as a community owned resource that benefits the community and helps to build local capacity?
- Does any joint research agreement remain in effect after the research project is completed?
- Are there plans for secondary use of data, or does the research involve secondary use of data?

**B9. What ethics review process is being used?**

Formal research proposals must be evaluated by a Research Ethics Board (REB) before they are approved. An REB is an authority created to evaluate whether or not a research project is acceptable. The existence of an REB at the researcher's organization (if applicable) does not exempt the project from adherence to the Framework, and approval of a project by an REB does not guarantee approval by First Light's designated Research Lead or the Research Governance Committee, as the case may be.

**This criterion may be assessed by asking the following questions:**

- Is ethics approval required for the proposed research project?
- What organization is the researcher affiliated with, and what is the relevant ethics oversight body?
- Has an ethics review process been completed?
- Does the project have approval by a relevant REB?



The Research Stages were designed to create an efficient and clearly structured research process to guide both First Light and the researcher through every step of the research process. The Research Stages also ensure that every aspect of the research process is enacted in a meaningful way according to our values, and that it fully integrates the priorities and principles of the Framework.

The research process should flow through all Steps of the following 4 Stages. In some cases it may be necessary to return to earlier Stages; the co-creation of knowledge may sometimes follow a circular or iterative path. It is understood that the approval of research projects and activities following the application of the Section 5 Assessment Criteria, whether by First Light's designated Research Lead or the Research Governance Committee, is a prerequisite for moving through any of the below Research Stages.

## **Stage 1 | Relationship-Building**

### **Step 1: Intake**

It is expected that all potential research partners be familiar with the First Light *Research Policy Framework* prior to approaching our organization to participate in or support a proposed or active research project. The purpose of this Step is to screen prospective research partners, whether they be individuals or organizations, to establish their broad research interest areas. This Step also serves to assess their understanding of the Framework and their suitability to pursue a research relationship that engages members of the urban Indigenous community through First Light. Researchers must be able to demonstrate an awareness of cultural humility, an understanding of the socio-cultural realities of the urban Indigenous population, a familiarity with Indigenous theories and methods, and an acceptance of the Framework's Guiding Values.

#### **Inputs:**

- First Light *Research Policy Framework*;
- Prospective research partner's broad interest area(s).

#### **Processes:**

- Application of Part A Assessment Criteria, whether through informal means (phone call or email correspondence) or formal means (in-person meeting and/or submission of a written proposal).

#### **Outputs:**

- Researcher's completed Self-Assessment Questionnaire;
- Updated *Research Roster* to include the approved researcher(s), as appropriate.

## Stage 2 | Project Co-Development

### Step 2: Collaborative Development of the Research Question

When a prospective researcher has cleared the screening process and established their broad research interest areas they are then listed on the *Research Roster*. Individuals and organizations on the Roster have been identified as researchers that may enter into a research relationship with First Light. They will then be engaged to co-develop a research question in collaboration with First Light to address a community-identified research need. To prepare for the co-development of the research question, the researcher should review the Registry of Research Topics, the First Voice Community Action Plan, and Section 4 of the Framework.

#### Inputs:

- Approved researcher;
- Registry of Research Topics;
- First Voice Community Action Plan.

#### Processes:

- Collaboration between First Light and the researcher to co-develop a research question addressing a community-identified need based on the Registry of Research Topics and/or the First Voice Community Action Plan.

#### Outputs:

- Research question.

### Step 3: Foundational Knowledge Production

After a research question is approved the researcher will conduct preliminary research. This may include a literature review, a scan of relevant or recent research, and the compilation of resources. The researcher will use the findings to produce a summary of foundational knowledge in support of the research question. This summary will inform First Light's decision to advance the research question to the next step, pursue further preliminary research, or revise the research question.

#### Inputs:

- Research question;
- Preliminary background research.

#### Processes:

- The researcher compiles foundational knowledge relevant to the research question and produces a summary.
- First Light reviews the summary to decide if the research project may progress, or if Step 2 and/or 3 need to be repeated.

#### Outputs:

- Summary of foundational research;
- Agreement to collaborate.

#### Step 4: Collaborative Development of the Research Process

In this Step the researcher may begin to build community connections by engaging with relevant First Light staff and/or community members to discuss the research question and the foundational knowledge summary. Discussions should include, as appropriate, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, community members, and relevant First Light staff. The results of the discussion must be used to inform the research proposal.

##### Inputs:

- Agreement to collaborate;
- Perspectives of Elders, Knowledge Keepers, community members, and staff regarding the research question and foundational knowledge summary.

##### Processes:

- Collaborative development of the research proposal through discussion of the research question and foundational knowledge summary with relevant community members. The research proposal must define all expectations regarding knowledge guardianship and data sovereignty. Discussion with the community may be conducted through formal means (e.g. a talking circle) or informal means (e.g. phone conversations and email).
- Review of the research proposal by participants in the development process.

##### Outputs:

- Finalized research proposal.

#### Step 5: Approval of the Research Project

Before the research project can begin, the proposal must be approved by First Light's designate Research Lead or the Research Governance Committee, as the case may be. Both or either will consider the *Research Policy Framework*, the Registry of Research Topics, and internal documentation concerning organizational operations and capacity to decide if the proposal will be approved, approved with conditions, or rejected.

##### Inputs:

- Research proposal.

##### Processes:

- Review of the research proposal by First Light's designated Research Lead and the Research Governance Committee.

##### Outputs:

- Approved research project.

#### Step 6: Defining the Research Relationship

Once the research proposal is approved, a joint research agreement must be drafted. All components of the joint research agreement must be finalized before the researcher can begin to conduct the research project. The research agreement will define the research relationship between First Light, the urban Indigenous community, and the researcher.

### **Inputs:**

- Approved research project.

### **Processes:**

- Drafting of the joint research agreement. The research agreement should:
  - Define the roles and responsibilities of the researcher and the community;
  - Define the individual and collective consent processes, including the ongoing negotiation of consent;
  - Define the roles of community members as part of the research team, and outline how skill building processes will be implemented;
  - Define the knowledge transfer between researcher, community, and relevant stakeholders;
  - Define balanced representation, community validation of data, and community validation of data processing and analysis;
  - Recognize the values of the Framework;
  - Recognize power differentials that may be specific to the research process;
  - Recognize the socio-cultural diversity of the urban Indigenous community and the challenges this may create, including issues of privacy and confidentiality;
  - Recognize the difference between public and private (sacred) knowledge; and
  - Define how research findings and new knowledge will be returned to or applied within the community.

### **Outputs:**

- Joint research agreement.

## **Stage 3 | Project Execution**

### **Step 7: Preparing to Start Research**

After the joint research agreement is developed, all parties involved in the research agreement must begin preparation to start the research project. Before the project can begin, all collaborators must be identified, and all community members or staff involved in the facilitation of the project must complete any necessary training.<sup>19</sup> If the researcher needs training to conduct community-driven research with the urban Indigenous community it must be completed before the project can start.<sup>20</sup>

### **Inputs:**

- Joint research agreement

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<sup>19</sup> Training of staff or community members would be relevant to the research process, and may include procedures such as conducting interviews or archival searches, using software, or transcription. Staff and community members supporting a research project must receive an informed orientation which includes their rights as participating facilitators, the scope, and length of the project.

<sup>20</sup> Training for researchers may include trauma-informed approaches to research, confidentiality processes, the principles of OCAP® or TCPS2.

**Processes:**

- Preparing the researcher, First Light, and the urban Indigenous community to start the research project by recruiting collaborators, training research assistants, and offering any workshops or training that is needed for the project.

**Outputs:**

- All partners in the research relationship are prepared to start the research project.

**Step 8: Data Collection**

Data collection can only begin when every partner in the project is prepared to start the research project. Data collection will look different for each research project, but regardless of the method used all participants must be provided with the opportunity to review and validate the knowledge they shared. First Light and relevant community members such as Elders and Knowledge keepers must be provided with a similar opportunity to review and validate the data. At this Step in the research process consent must be reviewed and affirmed by participants. While consent may be withdrawn at any point in the project, some participants may feel uncomfortable doing so, or may not recall the terms of consent.

**Inputs:**

- Research project question(s) and objective(s).

**Processes:**

- Data is collected using the method(s) outlined in the joint research project agreement, and participants, First Light, and relevant community members are provided appropriate opportunities to review and validate the data.
- Consent is reviewed and affirmed by participants in order to ensure it is understood in the evolving context of the research project and to confirm the use of the validated data.

**Outputs:**

- Validated data;
- Ongoing affirmative consent of project participants.

**Step 9: Data Processing and Analysis**

Once the collected data has been validated by participants and relevant community members processing and analysis may begin. Data processing and analysis can only happen with input and validation by participants, First Light, and relevant community members.

**Inputs:**

- Validated data;
- Consent to process and analyse data.

**Processes:**

- Processing and analysis of the data with input and validation by participants, First Light and relevant community members.

**Outputs:**

- Community-validated processed and analysed data.

**Stage 4 | Project Close-Out****Step 10: Data Synthesis & Distribution**

The knowledge created by the research process can only be compiled and shared after the data has been processed, analysed, and validated by project participants, First Light, and relevant community members. The community must be involved in the co-production of materials or co-authoring of any publication that will share the knowledge that was created.

**Inputs:**

- Community-validated processed and analysed data

**Processes:**

- Community co-production and/or co-authoring of all materials or publications in a manner that ensures the research findings are accessible to all relevant audiences.

**Outputs:**

- Co-created results of the research project that are available for distribution.

**Step 11: Applying the Findings**

Successful and meaningful community-driven research in pursuit of a community-identified need must have a positive, identifiable impact on the urban Indigenous community. The knowledge generated through the research process must be applied and used to the benefit of the community.

**Inputs:**

- Co-created research results.

**Processes:**

- The findings are mobilized by First Light, the community, and/or an external organization to create identifiable change that positively impacts the well-being of the urban Indigenous community. This may include the development of new programming, services, workshops, policies, or advocacy positions.

**Outputs:**

- Visible positive change for the urban Indigenous community.

**Step 12: Moving Forward & Lessons Learned**

The final Step of the research process is to obtain feedback from the community. This feedback will allow First Light to identify new research needs that may have emerged, or to cross a research question off the list. Whatever the outcome, the Registry of Research Topics will need to be updated and the cycle of research, knowledge creation, and growth will begin again.

**Inputs:**

- Co-created research results.

**Processes:**

- Obtain feedback from the community and identify potential new research needs.
- Celebrate the success and accomplishments of the community and the research relationship!

**Outputs:**

- Updated Registry of Research Topics.

All research projects involving First Light and the urban Indigenous community must strive to advance reciprocal relationships between the researcher and the community. Although they share a common foundation, every research relationship is unique and will unfold in its own way.

First Light has identified four primary Research Spaces to guide the diverse ways in which research may be conducted and knowledge shared. The descriptions of the following Research Spaces are meant to lend further context and to provide additional guidance in the way that this *Research Policy Framework* is applied to projects and activities that meet our *definition of research*. Although not all Research Spaces will necessarily include all Research Steps or Stages, they should still be reviewed by all prospective researchers, as they will be adapted and applied as deemed appropriate by First Light's designated Research Lead.

### **7.1 | External Research Space**

The External Research Space is a formal research relationship between First Light and an external research partner. This may include researchers from academic institutions (faculty, and PhD or Masters students), government agencies, or other community organizations. An external partner must be an informed ally who accepts our values and is fully committed to pursuing community-driven research. External collaboration may be initiated by the researcher or First Light. If a community-identified research need becomes an urgent priority, First Light may seek to initiate a project through a request for proposals or by directly approaching pre approved researchers listed on the *Research Roster*.

Most projects and activities that occur within the External Research Space will move through all of the Research Stages, without any adjustments.

### **7.2 | Internal Research Space**

Projects and activities that are initiated and led by First Light and that aim to benefit the organization from an operational or similar perspective take place within the Internal Research Space. Such projects and activities may focus primarily on carrying out assessments or evaluations that aim to measure the efficiency and impact of First Light's operations and its ability to serve the urban Indigenous community. This may or may not involve external parties.

The Internal Research Space includes all of the Research Stages, with the following adjustments as needed:

#### **Stage 1: Relationship-Building**

If an external partner is needed, First Light will prioritize qualified researchers who are listed on the *Research Roster*. If no such qualified researchers are listed, then potential candidates must first be screened by working through all Steps of Stage 1. Screening is meant to ensure that prospective researchers have a good understanding of the First Light *Research Policy Framework*, the socio-cultural realities of the urban Indigenous community, cultural humility, data sovereignty, and knowledge guardianship.



## Stage 2: Project Co-Development

An appropriate research proposal will be developed by First Light staff under the direction of First Light's designated Research Lead in collaboration with the Research Governance Committee. Research questions to be included in the proposal will be co-developed with any external researchers who may be engaged in the project and any associated activities. Final approval of such proposals rests exclusively with the Research Governance Committee in order to ensure that the project is beneficial to First Light, that it is aligned with the organization's priorities, and that it respects First Light's organizational capacity.

## Stage 3 & 4: Project Execution & Project Closeout

As research progresses, each of the Steps in Stages 3 and 4 must be considered, adapted, and applied as appropriate.

## 7.3 | Educational Research Space

The Educational Research Space includes research relationships between First Light and post secondary students seeking to complete course or program requirements, such as community based coursework, co-op positions, and internships. This space is intended for undergraduate students, but may be applicable to graduate students enrolled in programs that emphasize community placements, practicums, or course-based assignments in lieu of formal research projects such as theses or dissertations. Any projects and activities conducted in the Educational Research Space that engage students at Memorial University must have an approved Agreement in Principle as described in the Research Involving Indigenous Groups (RIIG) policy.<sup>21</sup>

Projects and activities undertaken in the Educational Research Space will move through all of the Research Stages, with the following adjustments as needed:

### Stage 1: Relationship-Building

While it is not necessary for students to be listed on the *Research Roster*, they must be working under the direction of an instructor or supervisor who is themselves listed on the Roster in order for the student to carry out projects and activities within this Research Space.

A research relationship with the instructor or supervisor must be in place prior to First Light being approached by any students working under their direction. It is the responsibility of all instructors and supervisors to ensure that their students are prepared to work with First Light and that they are familiar with both the Registry of Research Topics and the First Light *Research Policy Framework*.

Students will be expected to have a clear understanding of the diverse histories and cultures of urban Indigenous people in St. John's. At the discretion of First Light's designated Research Lead, students may be required to provide a statement describing their academic interests and the reasons they propose to work with First Light to complete any academic projects or activities. They may also be required to complete supplementary training in the histories and cultures of Indigenous Peoples.

Because research relationships that take place within the Educational Research Space tend to be short-term assignments vis-à-vis students, it is important that longer-term relationships be built vis-à-vis instructors and supervisors.

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<sup>21</sup> Memorial University's Research Involving Indigenous Groups (RIIG) policy may be found online at <https://www.mun.ca/research/indigenous-research-at-memorial/memorials-policy-on-indigenous-research/>.

## Stages 2: Project Co-Development

Typically students working with in this Research Space will be assigned a question by an appropriate member of First Light staff in order to support the organization's operations or to help the student build their foundational knowledge to be able to pursue one of the First Light's existing research priorities.

## Stages 3-4: Project Execution, and Project Close-out

Occasionally, the execution of projects and activities that are initiated within other Research Spaces may overlap with the Educational Research Space. In such cases, student researchers or interns may be engaged to support such projects and activities during Research Stages 3 and 4, provided they have cleared the appropriate screening criteria.

All research Steps within Stages 3 and 4 should be considered, adapted, and applied with the abilities and limitations of students in mind, if applicable.

## 7.4 | Advisory Research Space

Projects and activities that are initiated by external organizations requesting First Light support take place within the Advisory Research Space. Such projects and activities may include providing a letter of support, acting in a short-term advisory role, or serving on an external committee that will help to advance work on one or more of First Light's research priorities.

Projects and activities undertaken in the Advisory Research Space will typically move through only some of the Research Stages and their associated Steps, with the following adjustments as appropriate:

### Stage 1: Relationship-Building

Depending on the nature of the proposed projects and activities, it may not be necessary for a requesting individual or organization to be listed on the *Research Roster*. This would be the case, for example, when considering requests from individuals and/or organizations to have First Light provide a letter of support for their proposed research-related projects and activities. Even in these cases, however, it is preferable that there be a pre-existing relationship with the requesting individuals and/or organizations.

Consideration of the Part A Assessment Criteria described in Section 5 should take into account the nature of the proposed projects and activities and their associated resource demands. The more resource intensive the proposed projects and activities, the stronger should be the relationship between First Light and the individuals and/or organizations that are requesting advice.

### Stage 2: Project Co-Development

Whenever First Light is engaged to provide advice by serving on a committee (or in another similar role), it is essential that such committees operate with clear terms of reference and that First Light be given an opportunity to shape any such governing documents. Ideally, we would be approached at the outset of any projects and activities that occur within this Research Space before advisory mechanisms are put in place.

First Light will prioritize participation in advisory processes that are able to ensure that the diverse voices of the urban indigenous community are heard and that any advice rendered is implemented in meaningful ways. We will not participate in projects or activities that tokenize or marginalize Indigenous voices.

### **Stages 3 & 4: Project Execution & Project Close-out**

Given that projects and activities taking place within the Advisory Research Space are often resource intensive and may require significant time commitments and expertise from First Light staff, it is recommended that remuneration in the form of fees, funding, honorariums, and/or in-kind contributions to the organization be provided by those seeking our advice. Honorariums should be considered mandatory for any volunteer community members, as compared to paid members of First Light staff, who are approached to participate in external committees.

The following is a list of definitions that are essential to the First Light *Research Policy Framework*.

**Anti-colonial:** a form of discourse or way of thinking that acts as a guiding framework for the formation of alliances and partnerships between anti-oppression activists. Anti-colonialism builds upon ideas of Indigenization and anti-racism theory and practices, and creates a common ground for oppressed and marginalized groups to act in resistance to colonial tendencies.

**Axiology:** the theory of value, or the ethics and morals that guide the search for knowledge and judge which information is worth searching for. Axiology asks “what part of this reality is worth finding out more about, and what is it ethical to do in order to gain and use this knowledge?”. Axiology is an important component of an Indigenous Research Paradigm, along with ontology, methodology, and epistemology. An Indigenous axiology is built upon the concept of relational accountability. Without accountability to relationships, value judgements in research such as right and wrong, validity, and statistical significance, lose their meaning.

**Assessment or Evaluation:** A research process that examines the operations of an organization to meet planning and management needs. It may be used to verify a project’s progress, measure the impacts of a service or program, or to determine how to improve operations and increase organizational capacity.

**Collective consent:** is the ability of First Light to collectively withdraw the consent of all research participants who are members of the urban Indigenous community and previously authorized First Light to do so. Collective consent does not remove the need for individual informed consent, rather it enhances the existing mechanisms used to assess the implications of a research project for the wider community.

**Collaboration:** in research collaboration is an approach that involves community partnership throughout all stages of the research process, from the inception of the project to the publication and dissemination of findings.

**Community-Driven Research:** is research by the community, for the community, addressing a community-identified need. Community-driven research disrupts the colonial legacy of research by reshaping systems of power and creating lasting change. This is accomplished by recognizing the community as experts and centering their knowledges and experiences in all aspects of the research process, from setting the research agenda to disseminating results.

**Data Sovereignty:** Data sovereignty refers to the ability of an individual or a community to have control over how their data is collected, used, and shared. It acknowledges that data is an asset that has value, and that individuals and communities have the right to decide how their data is collected, used, and shared, rather than having this decision made for them by outside parties.

In the context of Indigenous communities, data sovereignty can be particularly important as Indigenous peoples have often had their data collected and used by outside parties without their consent or control. Data sovereignty seeks to empower Indigenous communities to take control of their own data and to use it in ways that benefit their communities and further their goals and interests. This may involve developing their own data collection and management systems, establishing protocols for the use and sharing of data, or advocating for the recognition and protection of Indigenous data sovereignty rights in policy and legislation.

**Decolonization:** the process of deconstructing colonial ideologies of superiority and privilege of dominant perspectives and approaches. Decolonization involves dismantling structures that perpetuate power imbalances while simultaneously valuing and revitalizing Indigenous knowledges and worldviews.

**Discourse:** a formal way of thinking that can be expressed through spoken or written mediums, it is a topic of discussion and a way of talking about it. Discourse is the way in which power, language, and institutional practices create a particular way of thinking. There may be multiple discourses, but there is usually one dominant discourse which consists of a set of assumptions about the world that reflects the interests of those with the most power.

**Epistemology:** the theory of knowledge, or the nature of thinking and knowing. It involves the theory of how we come to have knowledge, or how we know that we know something. Epistemology asks “how did we come to knowledge, and how do we know what is real?”. Epistemology is an important component of an Indigenous Research Paradigm, along with axiology, methodology, and ontology. An Indigenous epistemology focuses on the development of ideas through the formation of relationships.

**Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC):** is a specific right that pertains to Indigenous Peoples and is recognized in UNDRIP. It allows them to give or withhold consent to a project that may affect them or their territories. Once consent has been given it may be withdrawn at any stage. FPIC enables them to negotiate the conditions under which a project will be designed, implemented, monitored, and evaluated. All elements within FPIC are interlinked, and they should not be treated as separate elements. Consent should be sought before any project, plan or action takes place (prior), it should be independently decided upon (free), and based on accurate, timely and sufficient information provided in a culturally appropriate way (informed) for it to be considered a valid result or outcome of a collective decision-making process.

**Friendship Centre:** a non-profit organization usually located in an urban area to provide services and programming to the urban Indigenous population.

**Indigenization:** a process whereby Indigenous people bring Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing into spaces and processes that were not designed with these ways in mind. In the context of research this involves bringing Indigenous knowledge and approaches together with dominant knowledge systems.

**Indigenous:** used broadly to refer to the peoples who identify as the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in Canada. The term is used worldwide to refer to the peoples who identify as the original inhabitants of the land, or first peoples. Indigenous peoples are unique in their own cultures but share a common experience of colonialism and understanding of the world. Indigenous may also be used as an adjective to describe things belonging to these peoples, such as Indigenous knowledges. The term Indigenous has important political implications with regards to issues such as collective rights and self-determination.

**Indigenous knowledge:** knowledge systems embedded in relationship to specific worldviews, beliefs, lands, cultures, and communities. Indigenous knowledge may be expressed in symbols, arts, ceremonial and everyday practices, narratives, and relationships. Knowledge is held collectively by all members of a community, although some may have particular responsibilities for its transmission.

**Indigenous Research:** research done by and for Indigenous peoples. When we conduct research on our respective Peoples and issues, the work benefits from the view and experiences, and allows questions to be asked from a new perspective.

**Joint Research Agreement:** A document that clearly outlines the rights, responsibilities, and shared expectations of the collaborating parties involved in a research relationship. It ensures fair and respectful collaboration, and the final document must be understood and agreed upon by all parties.

**Methodology:** the theory of how knowledge is gained, or the systematic process used to search for knowledge. Methodology asks “how can one find out more about this reality?”. Methodology is an important component of an Indigenous Research Paradigm, along with ontology, axiology, and epistemology. An Indigenous methodology must be a process guided by relational accountability, emphasizing the values of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility.

**OCAP:** The First Nations principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) are a set of guidelines that have been developed by Indigenous communities in Canada to help protect and assert their rights to traditional lands, resources, and cultural heritage. The OCAP principles are intended to ensure that Indigenous communities have the right to determine how their lands and resources are used, and that they have control over the access and possession of these resources.

The main principles of OCAP are:

1. **Ownership:** Indigenous communities have the right to own their traditional lands and resources, and to determine how they are used.
2. **Control:** Indigenous communities have the right to control access to their lands and resources, and to make decisions about how they are used.
3. **Access:** Indigenous communities have the right to access their lands and resources, and to use them for traditional purposes.
4. **Possession:** Indigenous communities have the right to possess their lands and resources, and to benefit from their use.

**Ontology:** the theory of the nature of existence, or the nature of reality. Ontology asks “what is real - is there one ‘real’ world that we each observe differently, or do various worlds exist depending on the point of view of the observer?”. There is no definite answer to this question, and in response a set of ontological beliefs are developed. Research follows these beliefs of what is real in an attempt to learn more about this reality. Ontology is an important component of an Indigenous Research Paradigm, along with axiology, methodology, and epistemology. An Indigenous ontology is made up of the relationships that define reality.

**Reconciliation:** is establishing and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. It is a continuous process that includes but is not limited to: acknowledging and respecting Indigenous rights and title; learning about Indigenous history and recognizing the inter-generational impacts of colonization, assimilation, and genocide; respect for Indigenous beliefs, cultures, traditions, and worldviews.

**Research:** creative and systematic processes undertaken to create, share, and increase knowledge. Research is defined broadly in the Framework to encompass any intentional collection or creation of knowledge that is done by engaging members of the urban Indigenous community or First Light for the purposes of transmitting such knowledge to other parties. It can be. It can be conducted within or outside the academy, and in both formal and informal ways.

**Research Paradigm:** the beliefs that guide our actions as researchers, which include the way that we view reality (ontology), how we think about or know this reality (epistemology), our ethics and morals (axiology) and how we go about gaining more knowledge about reality (methodology). All research is represented by a paradigm used by the researcher, whether they are aware of their choice of paradigm or not.

**Rights holder:** an individual or group with constitutionally protected rights, including the right to self-determination, autonomy, and self-government.

**Stakeholder:** any individual, group, or organization that may be impacted by the outcome of a project.

**Urban Indigenous:** people of First Nation, Inuit, or Métis identity living, whether temporarily or permanently, in a city. Urban Indigenous identity is highly dependent on the person, and coexists with other forms of Indigenous identity.



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# APPENDIX C

## RESEARCHER SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

The following is a Researcher Self-Assessment Questionnaire adapted from Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (2009). Researcher self-assessment questionnaires are important because they encourage researchers to reflect on their own biases, beliefs, and practices, and to identify areas where they may need to make changes in order to conduct more ethical and respectful research.

By considering their own perspectives and the potential impacts of their research on the study participants and the community, researchers can take steps to minimize harm and maximize the benefits of their research. These questionnaires can also help researchers to become more aware of their own values and motivations, and to ensure that their research is aligned with the values and goals of the community in which they are working.

1. How do my research methods contribute to the development of respectful relationships between myself and the urban Indigenous community that I am studying?
2. How do my research methods support the creation of respectful relationships between myself and other research participants from the urban Indigenous community?
3. How can I engage with other participants in a respectful manner in order to strengthen our relationship with the shared goal of mutual learning and growth?
4. As a researcher, what is my role in this relationship and what are my responsibilities towards the urban Indigenous community and other research participants?
5. Am I fulfilling my role and responsibilities in a respectful and ethical manner, and how can I ensure that my research relationships are reciprocal and mutually beneficial?
6. How am I giving back to the urban Indigenous community through my research, and how can I ensure that the sharing and learning that takes place is mutually beneficial?



