Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Food Sovereignty

Expert Panel Report

THE CHARGE



How can policy and governance support Indigenous science in a way that advances Indigenous priorities and achieves reciprocal benefits for Canada's social, environmental, and economic goals?

SUB-QUESTIONS



- Key elements of a framework (that could support food sovereignty and food security in Canada)
- Opportunities for, and barriers to, supporting Indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) in Canada
- International examples
- Economic, environmental, and social benefits for all people in Canada

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Expert Panel on Indigenous Science and Food Sovereignty



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KEY TENSIONS

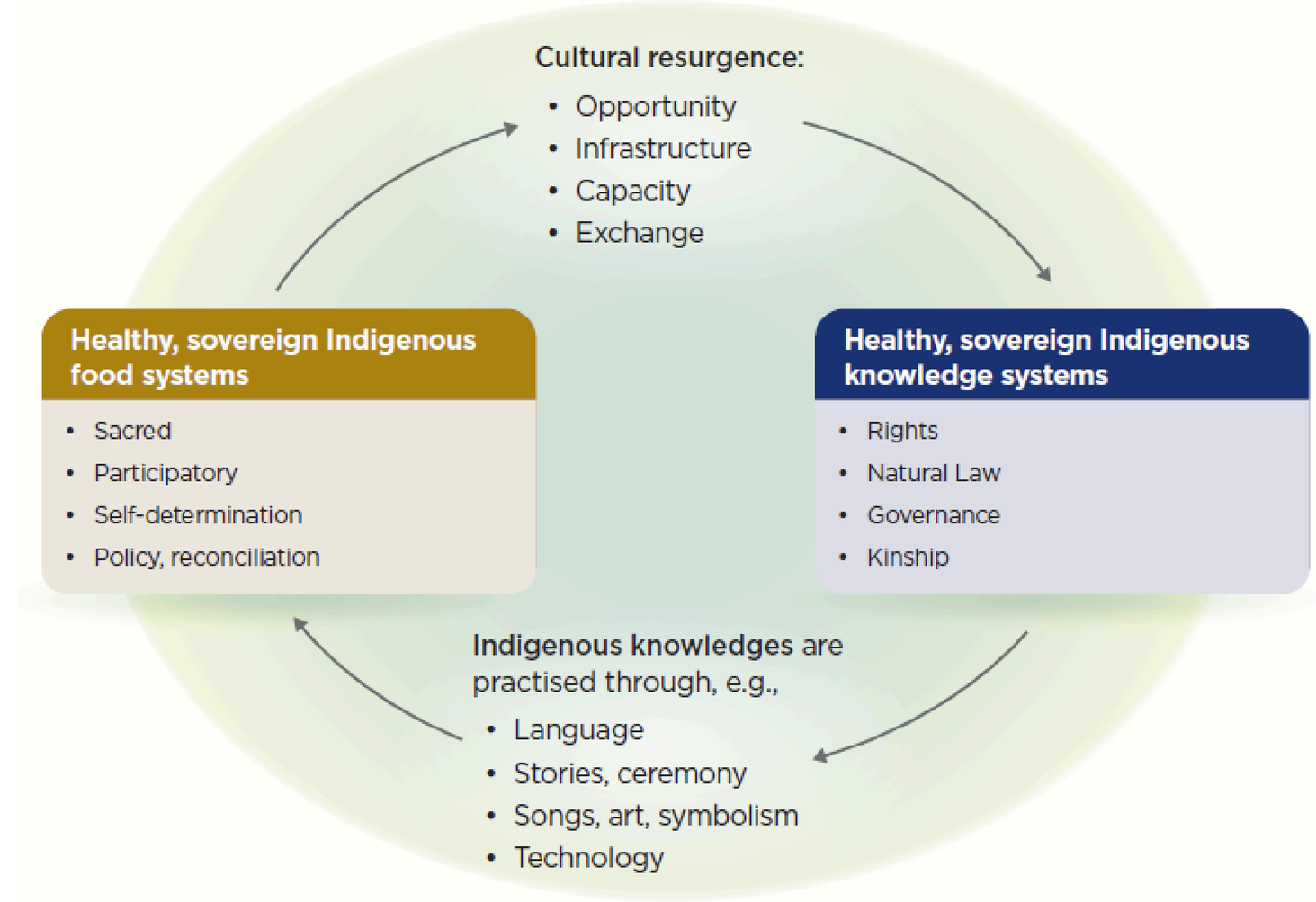


The panel members were grateful for questions, but wish to acknowledge some of the difficulties they faced in responding:

- Conversations are taking place largely outside of Indigenous communities.
- There is an imbalance of power between the sponsor and the Indigenous Peoples and communities with whom the sponsor seeks to work.
- There is tension between engaging IKS as content instead of as ways of knowing and producing knowledge
- The report does not speak to a consensus among Indigenous Peoples, but reflects individual panel member’s perspectives and experiences

KEY CONCEPTS AND TERMS

- IKS and Indigenous food systems are interrelated, mutually sustaining, and grounded in responsibilities
- There is a plurality of Indigenous knowledges, knowledge systems, food systems, and food sovereignties



CONTEXT



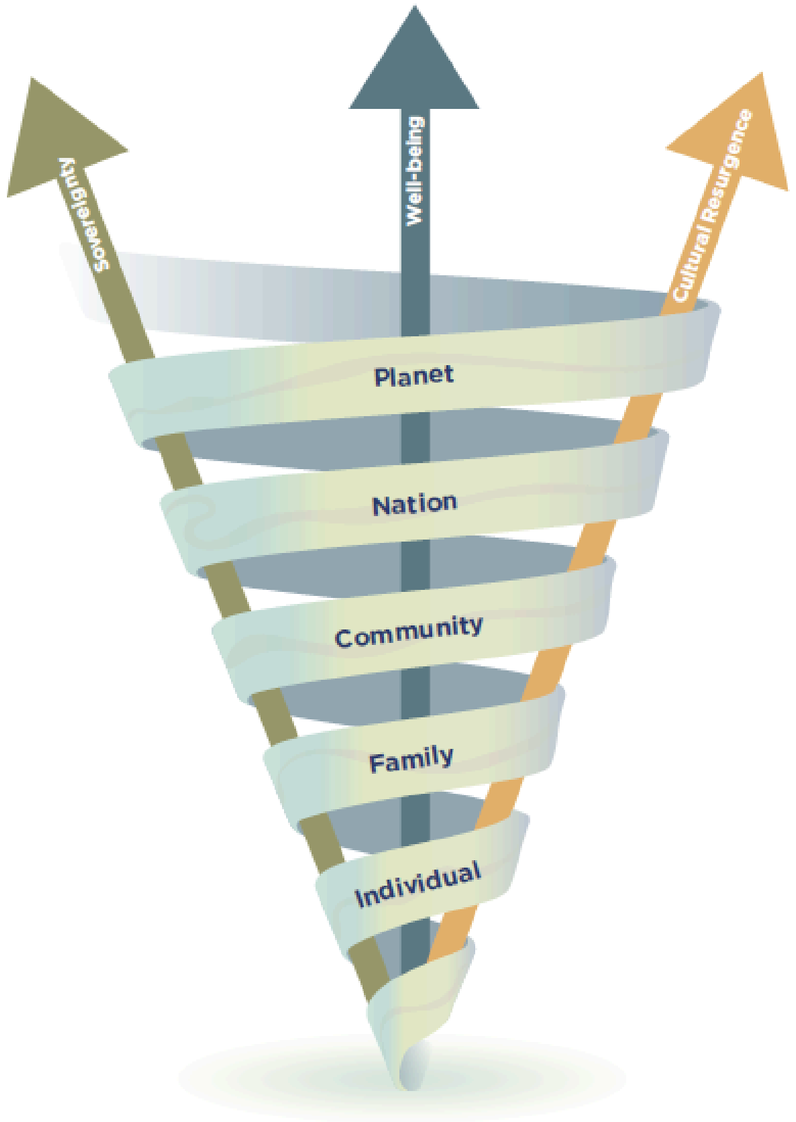
- Indigenous Peoples have always lived, embodied, practised, and engaged with IKS and food systems, and will continue to do so
- Canadian policies and regulation have explicitly acted to disenfranchise, assimilate, and displace Indigenous Peoples
- Regulations and policy continue to limit access to traditional foods
- Knowledge of historical and contemporary colonialism is necessary to engage with IKS in a good way

SUPPORTING HEALTHY INDIGENOUS SYSTEMS



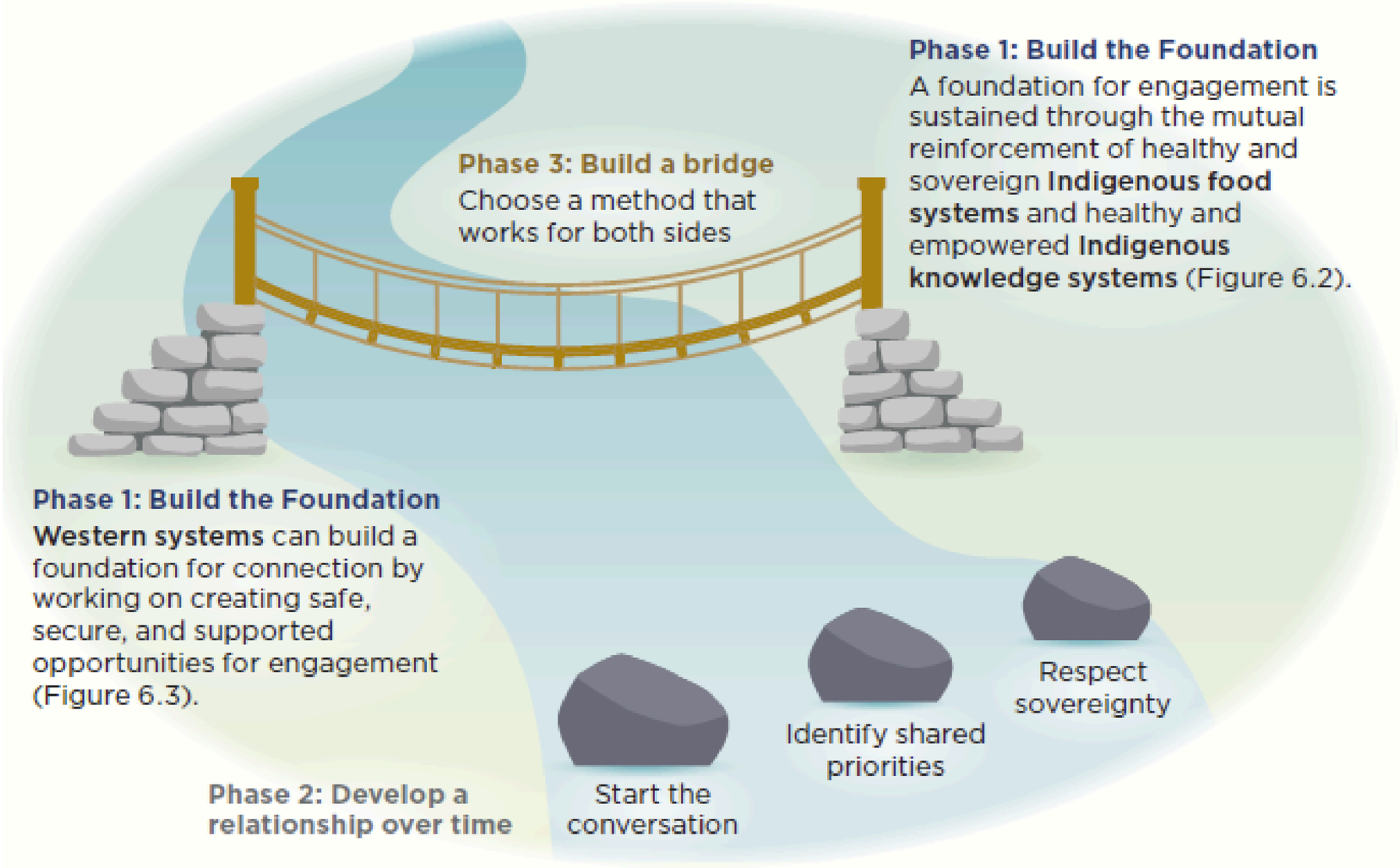
- Healthy IKS are interconnected with all aspects of Indigenous Peoples' lives, and healthy food systems stem from and support IKS.

- Healthy IKS and food systems are supported through three key pillars: sovereignty, well-being, and cultural resurgence.



THREE PHASES OF BRIDGING KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS





PHASE 1: BUILD THE FOUNDATION



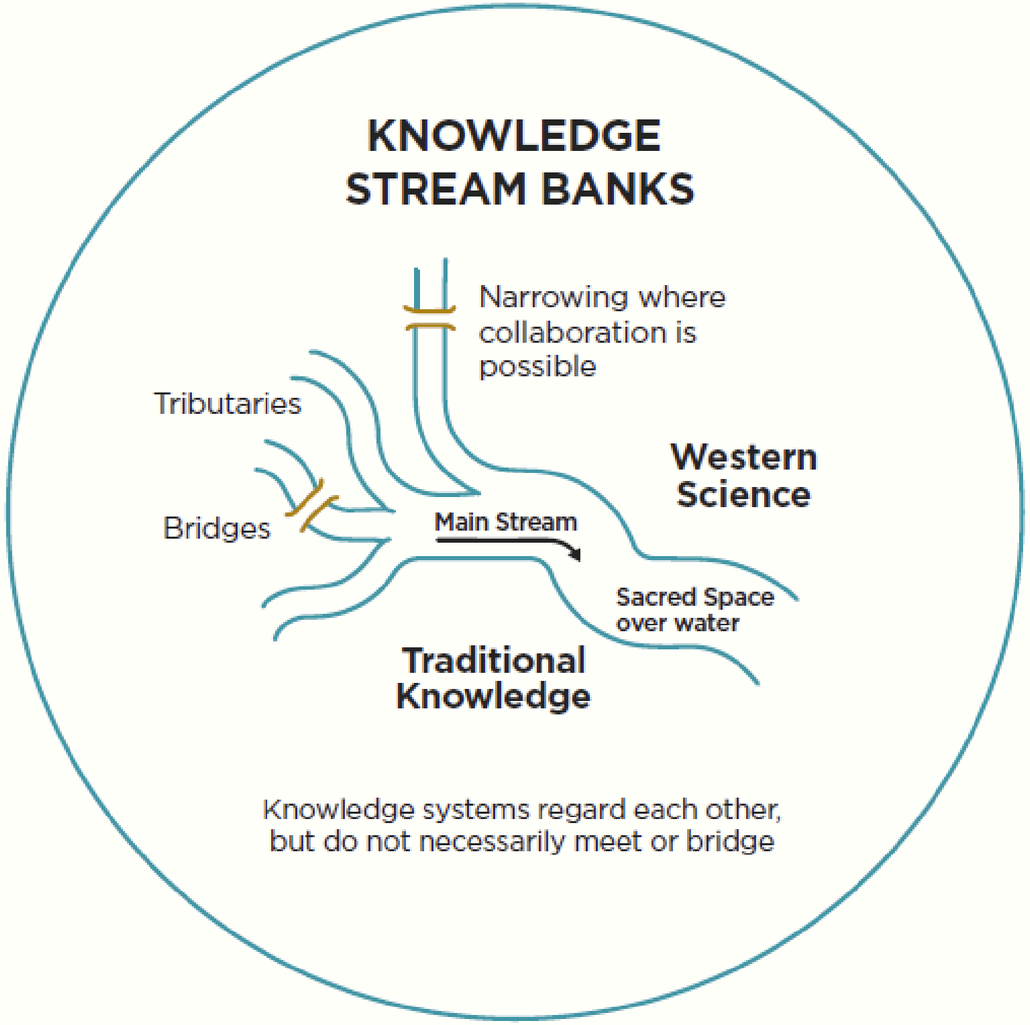
A foundation for meaningful engagement:

- Active and willing Knowledge Holders and Indigenous subject-matter specialists
- Healthy, empowered communities

Necessary conditions:	Safety	Security	Support
Actions to enable these conditions:			
Immediate	• Cultural safety training for government employees • Enabling access to Land and Water • Ensuring the ability to practise culture without persecution	• Trust building through repeated interactions • Ensuring access to clean water, culturally appropriate food, healthcare, education	• Investing in Indigenous capacity, knowledge systems, food systems • Ensuring adequate time and flexibility for engagement, decision-making
Long-term	• Recognition of and respect for Indigenous sovereignty • Systemic transformation in justice, education, and government to enable co-governance mechanisms • Investment to support self-sustaining Indigenous economies, as well as healthcare and knowledge systems • Support for healthy Indigenous food systems through vibrant and sustainable ecosystems		

PHASE 2: DEVELOP A RELATIONSHIP

- Recognize where the knowledge stream narrows
- Allow time and space for understanding priorities and context:
    - What do you wish to attain?
    - What do you wish to learn?
    - What are the obstacles?

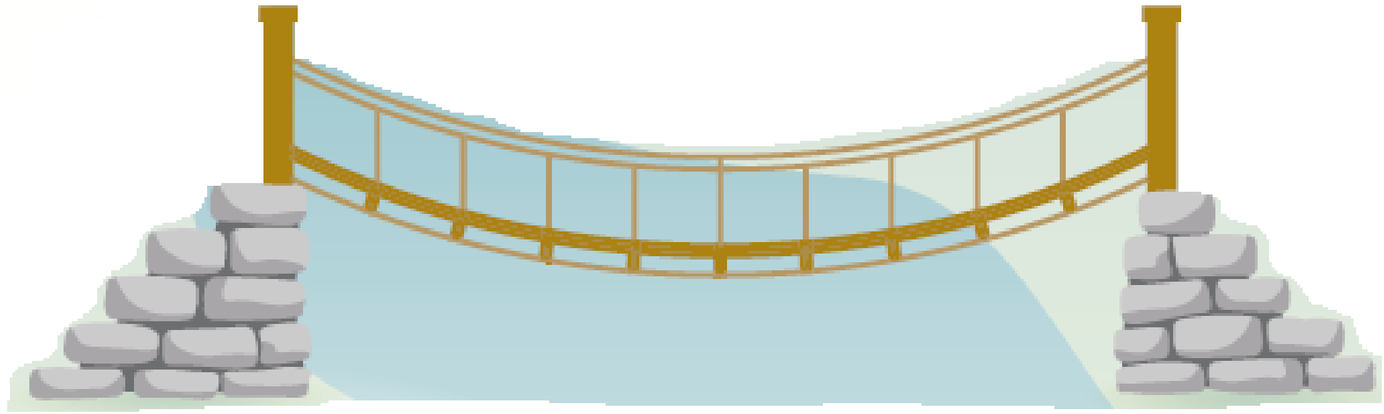


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PHASE 3: BUILD A BRIDGE



- Different approaches to bridging knowledge systems are appropriate for different contexts
- The best practice for any situation is one that is co-developed, co-managed, and co-governed by both Indigenous and western parties for a shared purpose
- Bridges solve specific challenges; foundations and relationships are sustained through ongoing effort



AN INVITATION TO REFLECT



- Healthy and sovereign Indigenous knowledge systems *are* healthy and sovereign Indigenous food systems
- Good work is already happening at all scales
- Shifting from supporting to investing in IKS is an avenue for transformational change
- There is opportunity for Canada to showcase leadership

If Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and food systems were fully recognized, respected, and supported, how might Canada be transformed?

QUESTIONS ?

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