

FIRST NATIONS FINANCIAL  
MANAGEMENT BOARD



The  
**RoadMap**  
Project

CHAPTER TWO:

**CLOSING THE ECONOMIC  
DATA AND STATISTICS GAP**

MAY 2022




First Nations  
FINANCIAL  
MANAGEMENT  
BOARD

CONSEIL  
DE GESTION  
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Premières Nations

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**The *First Nations Fiscal Management Act* (FMA) institutions believe in a better future supported by better information.**

## **THE SOCIOECONOMIC GAP BETWEEN INDIGENOUS AND NON-INDIGENOUS**

Canadians is a persistent barrier to reconciliation. A lack of readily available data and statistics compounds this problem: decision-makers do not have access to the kind of information they need to understand the causes, solutions, and complexity of the socioeconomic gap – and close it.

Allowing this data gap to continue means perpetuating an unacceptable status quo. Data inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians entrenches socioeconomic inequality by denying critical information to those responsible for decisions impacting the lives of Indigenous peoples.

## BARRIER TO INFORMED POLICY, ACCOUNTABILITY

The lack of data about Indigenous Canadians – both on and off-reserve – affects the lives of all Indigenous people by undermining informed decision-making and accountability at all levels of government. The lack of readily available and trustworthy data limits informed decision-making at all levels of government and prevents citizens from holding governments to account.

Better information would shine a light on the complex issues before us, empowering Indigenous decision-makers to set their course and measure progress. The right information would promote transparency and accountability at all levels of government. It would help us navigate a tangled mess of colonial policies, layers of bureaucracy, and systemic inertia. With timely, accurate, and readily available data, decision-makers can better understand what works, where, and why.



## THE STATISTICAL SOLUTION

The *First Nations Fiscal Management Act* (FMA) institutions believe in a better future supported by better information. In 2020, the First Nations Financial Management Board (FMB) embarked on First Nations revenue source research to quantify the impact that COVID-19 was having on Indigenous economies. This new research shed light on the Indigenous economy and equipped policymakers with the information required to launch the Own-Source Revenue in Indigenous Communities Initiative.

This research was not a one-off; the FMA institutions will continue to support all levels of government to make informed decisions by developing an economic data and statistics initiative. The FMA Statistical Initiative will support First Nations and other levels of government

by gathering and analyzing First Nations administrative data – the data required for self-determination. By closing the economic/fiscal data and statistics gap, we will promote the implementation of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (UNDRIP), greater optionality within a new fiscal relationship, and evidence-based decision-making for all levels of government.

This gathering, collating, and analysis of administrative data would restore Indigenous data to Indigenous people, strengthen the ability of First Nations governments to pursue their own goals, and improve decision-making processes that impact the lives of Indigenous citizens.



## STRATEGIC APPROACH

The FMA institutions will harmonize administrative datasets available from Statistics Canada (including the Census), Indigenous Services Canada, and other departments of government. By combining these existing datasets, the FMA Statistical Initiative will deliver a wealth of Indigenous economic and fiscal data resources to First Nations governments and stakeholders.

Once the existing datasets are collated, the FMA institutions will continue their consultation with First Nations governments and other stakeholders to determine Indigenous priorities for new data gathering and analytical initiatives. The resulting database will provide new opportunities for statistical analysis that can inform evidence-based decision-making on Indigenous priorities for the first time.

The FMA Statistical Initiative will conduct evidence-based research to provide more informed economic and fiscal policy recommendations. These efforts will advance the new fiscal relationship and provide meaningful insight in the areas of First Nations economic development, as well as other priorities outlined in the RoadMap, including: development of First Nations community infrastructure, expanded jurisdiction and fiscal powers, and opportunities for aggregation. By working collaboratively with First Nations governments, sister FMA organizations, the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC), partners, and stakeholders, the FMA Statistical Initiative will play a key role in making economic reconciliation a reality.

The expanded mandate and development of statistical capacity within the FMA institutions will follow a three-phase approach. The initiative will progressively develop its internal capacity, comprehensive data assets, and statistical solution deliverables. This framework provides significant upfront value for First Nations governments and other stakeholders and lays the foundation for the long-term success of this Indigenous-led statistical organization.

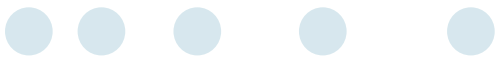


## PATH TO PROGRESS

Progress will require change. The FMA institutions believe that change is possible and that it starts with better data. Complex problems require **evidence-based decision-making informed by accessible and reliable data and statistics**. The FMA institutions can provide those tools, but require the mandate and resources to do so.

With better information we can expect better results from all levels of government. The FMA Statistical Initiative will ensure full economic and financial data access to First Nations governments, an important step toward reconciliation. By closing the economic data and statistics gap, we will promote the implementation of UNDRIP, offer greater optionality within a new fiscal relationship, and enable evidence-based decision-making.

**By working collaboratively with First Nations governments, sister FMA organizations, the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC), partners, and stakeholders, the FMA Statistical Initiative will play a key role in making economic reconciliation a reality.**





# INTRODUCTION

For decades, First Nations leaders have been calling for their right to govern their own data as a fundamental path to nation building/re-building and a key step towards reconciliation.



## TIMELY AND ACCURATE INFORMATION IS NEEDED

for governments to manage policies, departments, and programs. More importantly, it empowers citizens to manage their governments. Transparency and accountability, the bedrock of effective governance, means information must be accurate and available, empowering citizens to measure – and manage – their governments.

It should come as no surprise that one of the most challenging policy issues in Canadian history is something Canadians have very little information about: the socioeconomic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. This problem is complex and intergenerational – what if what we need is a completely new approach? What if better information could help us navigate the tangled mess of colonial policies, bureaucratic layers, and systemic inertia? Is better information the tool we need for **better decision-making, better management, and better results?**



Lack of accurate data on First Nations policy matters limits transparency, accountability, and the ability of all levels of government to make decisions based on measurable outcomes. In the absence of information, the public's inability to measure or manage government performance on Indigenous matters makes lack of progress even more frustrating. For First Nations citizens, lack of information makes governance equally confusing. Where can we look to see if our governments are doing a good job, if progress is being made, and if not, why not? With hindsight, it becomes obvious that what was not measured was not managed.

For decades, First Nations leaders have been calling for their right to govern their own data as a fundamental path to nation building/re-building and a key step towards reconciliation. Nonetheless, significant data governance capacity gaps remain, impeding First Nations' governments from exerting these rights and achieving their aspirations.



On June 21, 2021, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* came into force through Royal Assent, marking an important step in the journey towards reconciliation. As we walk this path together, we need information, data, and statistics to support the journey. **To walk this path without good data and statistics is to walk this path in the dark, without a guiding light.** We need these tools to tell us where we are and where we need to go.

The RoadMap Project exists to enable a better future for First Nations – and all Canadians – and a better future will require better tools. We believe that data and statistics will shine a light on the complex issues before us, empowering Indigenous decision-makers to set the course and measure progress in our journey. The right information will promote transparency and accountability at all levels of government.

The FMA institutions will support all levels of government to make informed decisions by developing a data and statistics initiative. The First Nations Revenue Research Report<sup>1</sup> in October 2020 proved that it is possible to collect reliable data on Indigenous governments and citizens to inform policy decisions affecting their lives. The FMA institutions' data and statistics initiative will focus on gathering and analyzing First Nations government economic and financial data, in partnership with First Nations and stakeholders, to support decision-making for the benefit of all Canadians.

The statistics initiative will serve several key objectives, including:

- **Provide economic and fiscal data and expertise – validity and integrity that all levels of government can trust**
- **Inform better policy decisions at all levels of government, including First Nations governments**
- **Establish a First Nations Financial Reporting Framework**
- **Enable optionality within a new fiscal relationship, including formula-based transfers and equalization frameworks**



**We believe that data and statistics will shine a light on the complex issues before us, empowering Indigenous decision-makers to set the course and measure progress in our journey.**

The FMA institutions will require the mandate and resources to support this initiative. Each First Nations government will be assured full access to their economic and financial data – the data required for self-determination – under this statistical initiative.

Data and statistics are the very foundation of evidence-based decision-making. As Canada seeks to implement UNDRIP and moves into a new fiscal relationship with First Nations governments, it will require reliable economic and fiscal data and statistics. Good policy decisions depend on good information. Only with improved data and statistics can we begin to make a difference as we walk this path together.

Information is not a quick solution; it is the foundation for success. Without it, we are lost in the woods, perpetuating the status quo. With it, we move forward on the journey toward reconciliation with an improved understanding of where we are now and where we are going.



# THE ECONOMIC AND FISCAL DATA AND STATISTICS GAP





**GARBAGE IN, GARBAGE OUT, OR GIGO**, is a principle used in computer programming to convey the idea that bad data produces bad results. The same principle applies to policymaking: if analysis, planning, and policy solutions are primarily based on data that is missing, fragmented, or of questionable quality, one should not expect substantive progress. Without sufficient data, stakeholders cannot measure progress over time and hold decision-makers to account. The challenges of data collection, and the failure to coordinate data between departments and levels of government, are yet another barrier to reconciliation. Although data gathering and analysis requires investment, blind decision-making is far more costly. For First Nations governments and citizens, **the lack of economic and fiscal data has hampered progress and hurt accountability.**

Governments rely on accurate and timely data and statistical information for the following purposes:

- Analyze economic information
- Develop fiscal, monetary, and foreign exchange policies
- Develop policies and programs to assist small businesses
- Support policy development and evaluate government programs on economic and social well-being
- Improve allocation of government program funding by determining their social and economic effects
- Determine equalization payments and other fiscal transfers
- Support tourism strategies and programs
- Identify new opportunities to exercise jurisdiction and taxation
- Assess the cost-effectiveness of health care and education programs
- Develop programs such as day care and subsidized housing<sup>2</sup>

Most Canadian citizens know that their governments can access an abundance of trustworthy data and statistical information to make decisions that will affect their lives. Most Canadian citizens can also access information that can help them determine whether their government is doing a good job, a cornerstone of effective governance.<sup>3</sup>

First Nations governments and citizens have no such access to data. The data gap for First Nations Canadians both on and off reserve affects the lives of all Indigenous people by undermining informed decision-making and accountability at all levels of government.

**The lack of readily available and trustworthy data has led to the following consequences for Indigenous Canadians:**

- **First Nations governments do not have sufficient social and economic data to support informed planning and policy decisions.**
- **Citizens of First Nations governments do not have sufficient information to determine if their governments are doing a good job.**
- **Federal, provincial, and territorial governments do not have sufficient data to support informed policy decisions impacting the lives of Indigenous peoples.**
- **Indigenous peoples, and all Canadian citizens, do not have sufficient information required to hold federal, provincial, and territorial governments to account for policy decisions on Indigenous priorities.**
- **Indigenous organizations do not have sufficient information to support the fulfilment of their mandates.**



The limited availability of data has been a barrier to research into First Nations socioeconomic trends. As a result, academic and policy research has often excluded Indigenous people and governments are left to make changes to existing policy, or create new policy, with incomplete data.<sup>4</sup>

In 1996, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples highlighted some of these statistical gaps and stated that self-governance would require improved data and statistical capacity:





**For Aboriginal people, knowing how political, demographic, social and economic changes will affect their nations and having in place data collection vehicles that provide a community and national level aggregate picture will be essential to Aboriginal government implementation and planning processes.”<sup>5</sup>**

In 2016, the Government of Canada endorsed UNDRIP without qualification and announced a new fiscal relationship with First Nations. Among its stated goals for a new fiscal relationship, the Government of Canada prioritizes “addressing the disparities and inequities in the socio-economic conditions between First Nations and other Canadians.”<sup>6</sup> On June 21, 2021, Canada adopted UNDRIP into law when the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* received Royal Assent.<sup>7</sup>

Healing and reconciliation through the implementation of UNDRIP and a new fiscal relationship will be a significant challenge for the Government of Canada, one that must be met with evidence-based decision-making. If reconciliation is to be a priority, quality information must drive policy recommendations that affect First Nations governments and communities.<sup>8</sup>

## Data and Statistics Gap Perpetuates the Socioeconomic Gap

In 2019, at the request of the Assembly of First Nations, Indigenous Services Canada produced a report on the application of the Human Development Index (HDI) to Registered Indians in Canada. The HDI, published by the United Nations, is a framework for measuring countries’ human development across three dimensions: lifespan and health, knowledge and education, and standards of living.<sup>9</sup>

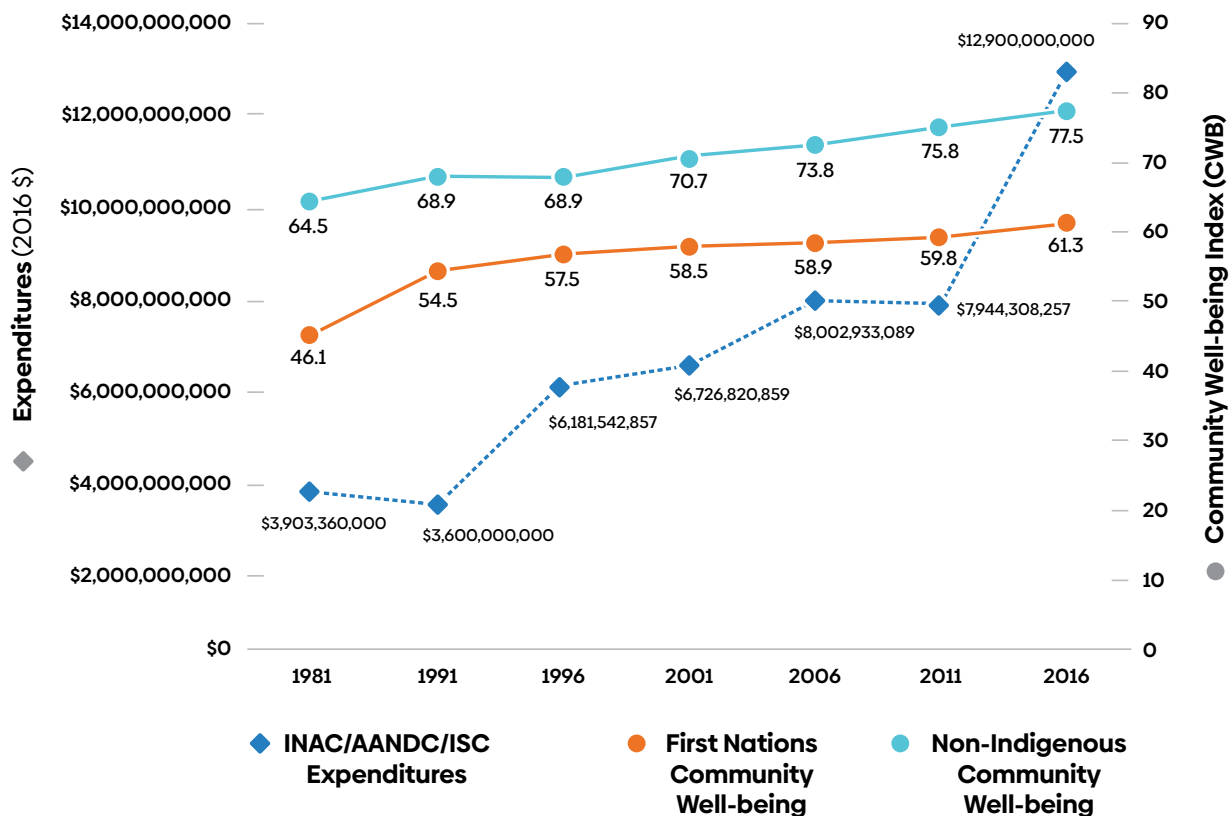
Although Canada is regularly at the top of the international HDI rankings, with “very high” levels of human development, the Registered Indian population would have placed 63<sup>rd</sup> among countries ranked in 2006, and 52<sup>nd</sup> among countries ranked in 2016.<sup>10</sup> Even this illustrative statistic is impaired by the fact that the data gap prevents a satisfactory understanding of a nation-wide Indigenous HDI.



The severity of the socioeconomic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians is well established. Canada's own development index, the Community Well-Being Index, shows scores for Indigenous communities that are far behind non-Indigenous communities.

Although the socioeconomic gap is evident, it is not well understood. Quality information is a key part of improving sustainable development and addressing well-being gaps.<sup>11</sup> When data does not inform decision-making, any substantive progress would be little more than luck. Indeed, a survey of both socioeconomic indicators and government monies spent on Indigenous policy shows that between 1981-2016, government spending increased significantly but the socioeconomic gap did not improve.<sup>12 13</sup>

## GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES VS SOCIOECONOMIC GAP



Not only has the socioeconomic gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians persisted, but since 1996 it has widened, despite increased expenditures by the federal government. The FMA institutions believe that government should prioritize and resource Indigenous people; **however, the continued socioeconomic gap is evidence that the lack of relevant data and statistics has contributed to an inefficient and ineffective use of government resources.** Without the foundation of reliable data and statistics, based on Indigenous priorities, policy decisions have been futile and ineffective in closing the socioeconomic gap - and will continue to be until stakeholders have the tools to measure progress and outcomes. If decision-makers lack even the most basic tools to inform policy and measure outcomes, the data gap will continue to perpetuate the socioeconomic gap.





# Data and Statistics Gap Undermines Transparency and Accountability

Without data to assess performance and compare service quality and levels, it is difficult to hold any government responsible for the socioeconomic gaps that remain between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.<sup>14</sup>

Without access to relevant information, government performance remains murky. The absence of information leaves citizens of First Nations, federal, provincial, and territorial governments without the tools they need to make informed decisions and hold governments to account. Objective evaluation of progress on key Indigenous issues or proposed solutions will always be limited while the data required is unavailable.<sup>15</sup>

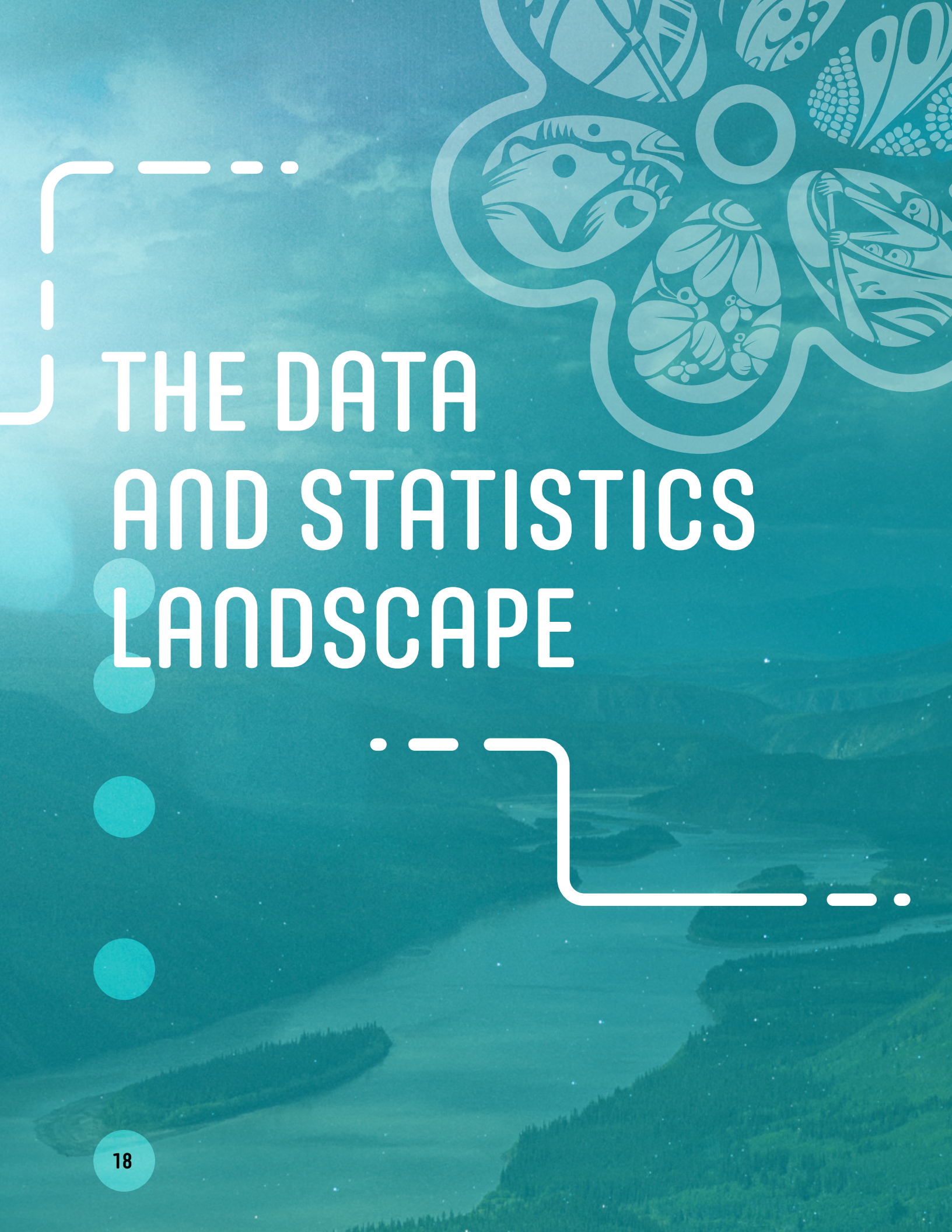
The quality, depth, and availability of statistical information is of paramount importance to effective governance. Not only does it inform decision-making and measure outcomes over time, but it provides citizens with vital information on the economy, society, and the environment that they need to judge their governments' performance.<sup>16</sup> As Jeanette Steffler notes in *Aboriginal Policy Studies*, "quality information is necessary for governments to put in place solid policies and programs effectively, to demonstrate accountability, and to be transparent to their citizens. Such information is the foundation upon which evidence-based decisions are made and monitored."<sup>17</sup>

The public requires relevant information to hold the federal government accountable for its performance on First Nations policy issues. The absence of this crucial information undermines government accountability and the democratic process. In the absence of data, governments point to dollars spent as a measure of their efforts, thereby washing their hands of lack of progress. In the eyes of the public, this one-dimensional metric shifts the blame for lack of progress from federal and provincial governments to First Nations governments. Polling confirms that most Canadians see the attention and money currently going towards First Nations issues as ineffective: many Canadians feel that Canada devotes too much money to Indigenous issues and that Indigenous peoples would be better off integrating into broader Canadian society.<sup>18</sup> The absence of reliable data on First Nations policy issues has played a role in shaping these uninformed perspectives.



**A better understanding of First Nations' contributions to the economy and the complexities of the socioeconomic gap would promote reconciliation instead of perpetuating false and negative stereotypes. It would inform the public and empower all Canadians to hold their governments accountable for performance on First Nations policy issues.**

The data gap also undermines the transparency and accountability of First Nations governments. First Nation leaders have a responsibility to govern in the best interest of their citizens, and citizens have the responsibility to hold their leaders accountable. Information enables First Nations to identify areas where they are doing well and areas where they may be able to do better.<sup>19</sup> Statistical information also supports leaders to better understand opportunities and challenges, and to learn from other First Nations.



# THE DATA AND STATISTICS LANDSCAPE



**SEVERAL ORGANIZATIONS COLLECT INDIGENOUS DATA**, including First Nations organizations, statistical agencies, government departments/agencies, and universities.<sup>20</sup> While Indigenous data exists, it is rarely in a form that can be easily disaggregated or accessed, which is a key challenge of the data gap. Organizations that collect Indigenous data include the following:

- **Statistics Canada**
- **First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC)**
- **Canadian Institute for Health Information**
- **Provincial/territorial statistical organizations**
- **Provincial, territorial, and municipal government departments/agencies**
- **Assembly of First Nations**
- **First Nations Fiscal Management Act (FMA) institutions: First Nations Financial Management Board (FMB), First Nations Tax Commission (FNTC), and First Nations Finance Authority (FNFA)**
- **Aboriginal Finance Officers Association (AFOA)**
- **Other Indigenous organizations<sup>21</sup>**

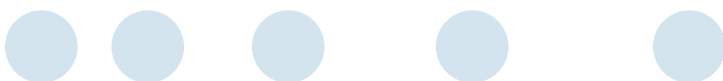


Table 1 reviews the Indigenous data environment, the key organizations that hold Indigenous datasets, and the role that the data and statistics division of FMB will play to serve the needs of First Nations governments.

**TABLE 1: INDIGENOUS DATA ENVIRONMENT**

Entity	Type of Entity	Data Aggregation and Data Types
<b>First Nations Financial Management Board (FMB)</b>	First Nations-led not-for-profit organization under the FMA, which partners with First Nations to advance their financial and governance capacities, as well as provides accounting support services that advance Indigenous financial management systems. FMB collects and maintains financial data of its client Nations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-level</li> <li>• Financial</li> </ul>
<b>First Nations Tax Commission (FNTC)</b>	First Nations-led not-for-profit organization under the FMA, which regulates, supports, and advances First Nation taxation under the FMA. FNTC collects and maintains First Nations taxation data of its client Nations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-level</li> <li>• Tax and jurisdiction</li> </ul>
<b>First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC)</b>	First Nations-led not-for-profit organization, with the strategic objective to develop datasets that are meaningful and relevant to Indigenous government decision-making. Takes the lead in conducting new surveys to collect Indigenous-specific datasets, providing insightful wellness research for First Nations and other levels of government, and providing statistical capacity-building for Indigenous Governing Bodies. Envisions that every First Nation will achieve data sovereignty in alignment with its distinct worldview.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National, regional, and subregional-level, with datasets collected at the individual-level</li> <li>• Health and wellness, socio-economic, culture, and language</li> </ul>



**TABLE 1 CONTINUED**

Entity	Type of Entity	Data Aggregation and Data Types
<b>Statistics Canada</b>	A department of the federal government of Canada with the mission to provide quality statistical information to serve Canada and its population. Provides comprehensive data and statistical services for government, business, academic, and personal uses. Maintains a comprehensive amount of socioeconomic and demographic Census data regarding First Nations communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-level</li> <li>• Demographic and socioeconomic</li> </ul>
<b>Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)</b>	A department of the federal government of Canada that oversees service delivery between the government of Canada and First Nations governments. ISC maintains registry data regarding First Nations communities, including figures on population, geography, First Nations government financial statements, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-level</li> <li>• Demographic and financial</li> </ul>
<b>Other government departments and agencies, and other organizations</b>	Numerous federal, provincial, and territorial governments, departments, and agencies collect select data regarding the Indigenous population in Canada. Other organizations also collect data regarding specific programs and deliverables. These datasets are often limited in scope, and capture only a limited aspect of the Indigenous population.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community and national level</li> <li>• Multiple types of datasets</li> </ul>





# Census, Surveys, and Administrative Data

**Indigenous statistical data comes from two general sources:  
Census/surveys and administration.**

## CENSUS AND SURVEY DATA

Survey data includes both special surveys and the Census of population.

### Census of population

The Census, including the 2011 National Household Survey, is the primary source of data for existing statistics on Indigenous people. Statistics Canada conducts this mandatory survey of high-level demographic and socioeconomic information of all Canadians on a periodic basis.<sup>22</sup> Census data includes specific data on First Nations, Non-Status Indians, Metis, and Inuit. The Census provides a breadth of information on all Canadians that enables high-level trend analysis of socioeconomic indicators. This data has been useful in measuring gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians through trend analysis of indicators, including the Community Well-Being Index, an aggregate indicator measuring education, income, employment, and housing.<sup>23</sup>

Although Census data is key to measuring high-level socioeconomic gaps, it fails to measure well-being from an Indigenous perspective and its measures do not reflect Indigenous priorities.

### Special surveys

Targeted special surveys can provide a depth of information on specific topics, and for specific segments of the population.<sup>24</sup> Statistics Canada and the FNIGC have each conducted multiple special surveys on target populations and regions. FNIGC has conducted the following surveys over the last 20 years, many of which were the first of their kind:

- **First Nations Regional Health Survey**
- **First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey**
- **First Nations Labour and Employment Development Survey**
- **First Nations Oral Health Survey**
- **First Nations Community Survey<sup>25</sup>**

The limitation of special surveys is that they are resource intensive, and capture a point in time, rather than change over time. FNIGC aspires to conduct these surveys over multiple years, which will provide a valuable comparative of these measures across time. This ongoing work will complement the economic and fiscal data and statistical work of the FMA institutions and will add significant value for First Nations communities across Canada. Of the few special surveys on Indigenous peoples, none have yet had the resources required to offer breakthrough insight into the socioeconomic gap.



## ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Administrative data is data that government departments and agencies collect in support of programs and operations, or for reporting requirements for funding agreements.<sup>26</sup> Although there is an abundance of administrative data, it is dispersed across multiple federal and provincial departments. ISC alone has over 160 databases related to Indigenous peoples.<sup>27</sup> In addition to ISC, over 30 other federal departments collect and silo information on Indigenous peoples and each of these departments makes decisions based on incomplete, fragmented, and often unverified information.<sup>28</sup> The inevitable result is suboptimal policy decisions. Compounding the issue, the data that departments and agencies collect often focuses on what was spent, what was done, and what was produced, but not the actual impacts and effects of programs. It is gathered based on government priorities rather than Indigenous priorities.

**Economic data from administration sources include the following material, important to supporting a new fiscal relationship, UNDRIP, and First Nations:**

- **First Nations government audits**
- **Reports provided to the federal government by First Nations governments in fulfilment of transfer agreements**
- **Other data collected by federal agencies from First Nations**
- **Data collected and statistics disseminated by First Nations to facilitate investment and support economic development**
- **Data collected by FMA participants to support their local financial management and debenture systems**
- **First Nations economic and fiscal data collected by the federal, provincial, and territorial governments**



**The FMA institutions have specialized knowledge in First Nations financial management, taxation, lending, and economic development. Each FMA institution gathers data and produces statistical information to support the accomplishment of its mandate.**

Not only is administrative data siloed across multiple departments and agencies, but it is also often in a format that is difficult to access or use. Audited financial statements, for instance, are presented in PDF format with no uniform reporting framework, which makes it challenging to analyze and compare data to better understand regional and national trends.

Administrative data is not useful to First Nations stakeholders because it is fragmented across multiple datasets; was not collected based on their priorities; and First Nations peoples do not have ownership, control, access, or possession of the data. There is currently no statistical coordinating body to collate and analyze this information. Administrative datasets would have enormous research potential if there was a coordinating body to collect, collate, house, and analyze data from different administrative databases.

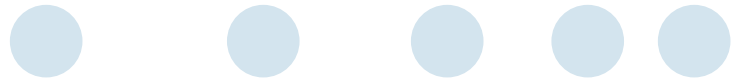
The founders of the FMA institutions envisioned a statistical institute as an administrative data collector and considered it to be a key element of the FMA. To accomplish this objective, the founders created

the First Nations Statistical Institute (FNSI). FNSI's mandate was broad and did not focus specifically on fiscal and economic considerations. Due to budget cuts from the federal government, as well as an inability to meet its overly broad mandate, FNSI was dissolved in 2013. FNSI's story provides lessons for today's challenges. First is the significance of establishing a focused mandate on economic and fiscal data and statistics. Second is the importance of leveraging the specialized knowledge and capacity within the FMA institutions regarding First Nations financial and economic issues.

The FMA institutions have specialized knowledge in First Nations financial management, taxation, lending, and economic development. Each FMA institution gathers data and produces statistical information to support the accomplishment of its mandate. The FMA institutions, with an existing network of over 300 First Nations governments under the FMA framework, are well positioned to ensure the successful implementation of an FMA statistical initiative.



# Data Governance



The existence of administrative data poses a data governance problem: administrative datasets are driven by federal government priorities, instead of First Nations priorities, and are governed and controlled by non-Indigenous governments. The subjects of data gathering do not have access or control of this data, and there is little engagement, cooperation, or consultation with First Nations communities in the gathering, management, or ownership of this information.<sup>29</sup> This lack of ownership and inclusion in data governance is the continuation of a colonial and paternalistic government approach to Indigenous peoples and is contrary to the principles of UNDRIP. The exclusion of First Nations peoples from data governance has only reinforced the disconnect between policy decisions and Indigenous values.

In contrast to the historical collection of First Nations data, FNIGC and its regional partners assert that Indigenous peoples must have control over data collection processes and how this information can be used. It has defined these rights as OCAP: Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession.<sup>30</sup>

There is an opportunity to return First Nations data to First Nations people. The gathering, collating, and analysis of this information by a First Nations-led organization would not only better inform decision-makers at all levels of government, but it would be a step towards reconciliation. It would return First Nations data to First Nations people; it would strengthen the ability of First Nations governments to pursue their own goals; and it would improve decision-making processes that impact the lives of Indigenous citizens.



The gathering of information and its subsequent use are inherently political. In the past, Aboriginal people have not been consulted about what information should be collected, who should gather that information, who should maintain it, and who should have access to it. The information gathered may or may not have been relevant to the questions, priorities, and concerns of Aboriginal peoples. **Because data gathering has frequently been imposed by outside authorities, it has met with resistance in many quarters.**<sup>31</sup>

– Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP)

An Indigenous statistical coordinating body that could collect and analyze economic/ fiscal data would be an important first step; however, the FMA institutions believe that data partnerships will be instrumental in improving data governance and closing the broader data and statistics gap. Economic and financial data is of primary interest to the FMA institutions, but broader data capturing social, cultural, and health information is also critical to Indigenous stakeholders. Data collection is resource intensive and there is no single organization with the capacity and the social licence to unilaterally address the data and statistics gap.<sup>32</sup>

Both economic and broader societal data exist across a variety of locations, departments, and organizations. This data is siloed with minimal data linkages and little Indigenous ownership or access. Partnerships could bring together data for management, storage, and analysis – based on the principles of OCAP.

Partners in closing the data and statistics gap would be those parties holding existing datasets, those engaged in data gathering, and those with the right to own and access the data.

#### **Partners may include:**

- **First Nations communities, their Nations, and governments**
- **FNIGC and its network of regional partners**
- **Other First Nations organizations and stakeholders**
- **Federal, provincial, and territorial government departments and agencies**
- **Other data-gathering organizations**

The FMA Statistical Initiative will work in partnership with the FNIGC, which is a community-driven and First Nations-based statistical organization. FNIGC's strategy is to establish a network of apolitical, expert-based regional information governance centres led by and for First Nations in every region. The regional centres will be equipped to meet local and regional needs, and a national centre – in collaboration with its regional partners – will be equipped to address First Nations' needs that are best achieved at the national level. This will provide specialized organizations, like the FMA Statistical Initiative, better access to and use of data, while protecting and respecting First Nations' rights over their data. This is about Nations choosing to come together to address common data capacity service needs at the local, regional, and national levels.





**Both economic and broader societal data exist across a variety of locations, departments, and organizations. This data is siloed with minimal data linkages and little Indigenous ownership or access.**

The FMA Statistical Initiative will be a key player in this new First Nations' data landscape and will maintain a specialized focus on fiscal and economic data and research. In doing so, the FMA Statistical Initiative will build up its own internal data and statistical capacities – a crucial component of the RoadMap and economic reconciliation. FNIGC and the FMA Statistical Initiative will work together collaboratively and will complement each other in serving the data and statistical needs of First Nations communities across Canada. The senior leadership of FNIGC and the FMA institutions continue active discussions of cooperation and will secure this relationship in a memorandum of understanding to maximize value for their mutual First Nations clients.

Mutual benefits would include better information to support decision-making by Indigenous, federal, and provincial governments, as well as Indigenous organizations. Partnerships would particularly benefit First Nations governments by ensuring their ownership, control, access, and possession of their own data – the data required for self-governance.





# A PATH FORWARD

**THE FMA INSTITUTIONS HAVE ALREADY DEMONSTRATED** what is possible when it comes to using economic and fiscal data and statistics for evidence-based decision-making. In October 2020, FMB published the *First Nations Revenue Research Report*.<sup>33</sup> In the absence of readily available trusted data, FMB embarked upon revenue source research to quantify the impact of COVID-19 on Indigenous economies. The report led to an improved understanding of First Nations economies, particularly own-source revenue, such as revenue that First Nations governments produce through government business enterprises. For the first time, FMB was able to capture the size of the national First Nations economy, as well as estimate the economic impact of COVID-19 on First Nations governments.



This report provided timely and accurate information that went on to inform policy. It empowered the Government of Canada to identify a need and respond to it intelligently through evidence-based decision-making. Based on the FMB's analysis of the impact of the global pandemic on First Nations economies, Indigenous Services Canada announced the Own-Source Revenue in Indigenous Communities Initiative. This program provided \$332.8 million to partially offset declines in own-sources revenue and support Indigenous governing bodies to continue to develop the fiscal capacity to self-govern.<sup>34</sup>

No government or organization is collecting or analyzing the type of information contained in the FMB report. Prior to its publication, the Government of Canada had no way of knowing the scope and breadth of First Nations economies in Canada; yet the FMA institutions have shown that data and statistical innovation is both possible and can inform better decision-making. It is critical that this type of data is collected to better inform policy decisions that affect the lives of First Nations citizens.

# Empowering UNDRIP and Building a New Fiscal Relationship

The FMA institutions will address the economic data and statistics gap by collaborating on a statistical initiative to gather, house, and analyze Indigenous financial and administrative data for the benefit of First Nations governments, citizens, and institutions. Insights will also inform the federal and provincial governments, and all Canadians. A comprehensive Indigenous economic database will provide a level of data access, validity, and integrity that First Nations governments can trust. Indigenous leaders will gain a clearer picture of the socioeconomic realities of their First Nations communities and will be better positioned to plan for the future of their communities. Statistical analysis will inform all levels of government, leading to evidence-based decision-making and policies that work.

## Supporting Evidence-Based Decision-Making and Planning

The implementation of UNDRIP will require data availability and validity; not only more data but data that all levels of government can trust. The FMA institutions will support First Nations, federal, and provincial governments on their journey towards healing and reconciliation by providing accurate economic and fiscal data and statistical analysis to provide governments with the tools they need to set priorities, plan, and assess progress. With data, governments will create national and regional baselines to better understand the challenges of the status quo and measure progress towards a better future. Stronger data allows for better information that will support meaningful outcomes, empowering governments to make evidence-based decisions. The FMA institutions will support reconciliation by ensuring that First Nations peoples can access and use their own data – data that for so long has been gathered and controlled by non-Indigenous institutions.

By creating a comprehensive dataset, each First Nations government will have access to all the data pertaining to its government and communities. This can be provided as raw data, or in report format that provides greater accessibility to First Nations community leaders and decision-makers. Both accessibility and usability of data will be important services provided by the FMA institutions.



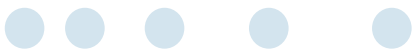


## Promoting Bureaucratic Efficiency

First Nations data is dispersed across multiple government departments and agencies, and there is no single branch of government with a complete picture of the First Nations financial and administrative landscape. Prior to the First Nations Revenue Research Project, government agencies had limited knowledge about the size of the First Nations economy. For too long, a maze of colonial structures, processes, and institutions have characterized the Crown-Indigenous relationship. Reliable and available data would create the opportunity for transformational change and effective governance.

High-quality, culturally relevant data is critical for shaping policy that works. It would support research to inform program and policy initiatives and provide the means to measure their effectiveness.<sup>35</sup>

- **The Government of Canada would gain an objective method to measure the effectiveness of their programs, and whether taxpayer dollars are spent in a manner that provides a real benefit for Indigenous people across Canada.**
- **Governments would rely on quality data and statistical analysis that is aligned with Indigenous values and priorities. The FMA Statistical Initiative will reflect the values and worldview of Canada's First Nations peoples and will provide an approach to addressing policy issues that is culturally appropriate, evidence-based, and relevant to federal, provincial, and territorial governments.**
- **Objective measures would provide accountability mechanisms within federal and provincial government departments, to ensure that internal programs and projects are meeting their objectives.**

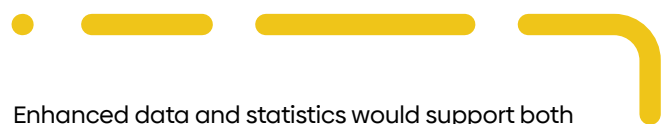


# Supporting Optionality Within a New Fiscal Relationship

Improved statistics would support the implementation of UNDRIP through improved fiscal capacity to self-govern because it would create **a foundation for mutual accountability and greater optionality within the fiscal relationship**. The more flexible a transfer, the more assurance is required that the transactions have been carried out in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.<sup>36</sup> Data and statistics must underpin a new fiscal relationship to enable stakeholders to compare service quality and levels; facilitate transfer or equalization formulas; and measure performance, outcomes, and innovations.<sup>37</sup> The use of financial data and statistics, which can describe a government's financial transactions in the form of public accounts, would empower both First Nations governments and the Government of Canada to pursue change.

Statistics would provide the following support for a new fiscal relationship:

- **Comparable service and infrastructure standards for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians**
- **Projections of service costs**
- **Formula-based transfers**
- **Government revenue and revenue assessment information**
- **Revenue equalization formulas**
- **Public finance and accounts**
- **Infrastructure project management quality and operational efficiency**
- **Other administrative statistics to support the exercise of new powers and responsibilities**
- **Promotion of applied academic research**



Enhanced data and statistics would support both marginal improvements to the current fiscal relationship and would open the door for other innovations, including formula-based transfers. **Limited data limits the ability to make change.** Trustworthy and available data would enable the development of transparent formulas for determining federal transfers to First Nations governments, based on specific cost-drivers associated with specific socioeconomic and demographic characteristics. These datasets will enable the FMA institutions to draw deeper insights into economic and fiscal policies that can bring about economic reconciliation.



# Empowering Self-Determination

Data and statistics will empower First Nations self-determination and the ability for their governments to make informed decisions as they plot their own paths forward. Economic data and statistical capacity will provide clear and transparent information about resources expended by governments, and whether these resources are benefiting Indigenous communities. In the current fiscal relationship, First Nations governments report to the federal government and account for federal transfers in accordance with federal guidelines. This structure makes First Nations governments more accountable to the federal government than they are to their own citizens – without holding the federal government to account for its performance on Indigenous priorities.

In contrast, data and statistics would empower Indigenous self-determination by promoting mutual accountability and transparency between Indigenous and non-Indigenous governments. Data and statistics would clarify financial and service responsibilities, as well as performance, between governments. For the first time, governments could specify, measure, and manage service level consistency across the country.<sup>38</sup>

Economic and fiscal data availability and statistical capacity are requirements of a new fiscal relationship, and will promote Indigenous empowerment. Accurate and timely information, reflecting First Nations' priorities, will strengthen the capacity of their governments to self-govern and pursue their own goals.<sup>39</sup> With economic and fiscal data assets, First Nations governments can choose to develop metrics to measure socioeconomic gaps and better understand causes and solutions, including demographic outcomes (education, income, employment rates, housing conditions, etc.) and policy-specific funding, programs, or the benefits of the FMA. Using real-world data, First Nations governments can measure the effectiveness of specific policies in an objective manner.

- **Leaders of First Nations governments can evaluate fiscal policies and their socioeconomic outcomes both over time, and in comparison to other Indigenous communities (via anonymized comparison):**
  - Over time, the effectiveness of policies can be measured and evaluated to determine if specific programs and projects should be continued or adjusted to better serve community needs.
  - In comparison to other First Nations governments, Indigenous leaders can evaluate if effective policies employed by other First Nations governments would benefit their specific communities.
- **First Nations leaders will take the lead in forming future data and statistical studies that best serve the needs of their communities.**
- **The FMA Statistical Initiative will provide objective measures for fiscal policy and economic progress, just as the Financial Administration Law provides objective standards for financial management systems.**

**In the current fiscal relationship, First Nations governments report to the federal government... This structure makes First Nations governments more accountable to the federal government than they are to their own citizens – without holding the federal government to account for its performance on Indigenous priorities.**



# THE STATISTICAL INITIATIVE

| The FMA institutions are well-positioned to work with First Nations governments to determine Indigenous priorities for data gathering, analysis, and governance.

**THE FMA INSTITUTIONS WILL DEVELOP** economic and fiscal statistical capacity to support evidence-based policy development that will benefit First Nations peoples and governments, their institutions, as well as federal, provincial, and territorial governments. Through active collaboration with stakeholders, including FNIGC, they will provide statistical analysis based on the priorities of First Nations governments. These solutions will fill gaps in the existing data and provide new statistical studies to inform First Nations, federal, and provincial governments to support policy that improves the lives of Indigenous people.

There are two key statistical solutions that the FMA institutions will provide:

- 1. Comprehensive database that will serve the needs of First Nations governments and institutions**
- 2. Statistical analysis to inform First Nations governments and other levels of government in developing evidence-based policy**

**Defining the scope of the FMA Statistical Initiative is important**, as this will establish a focus and specialization that fills the current First Nations economic and fiscal data gap. In addition, this specialization will capitalize on the strengths of the FMA institutions and ensure success as the statistical initiative advances. A case study of two First Nations (from the Oji-Cree and Secwepemc First Nations) published in *World Development* found that economic factors such as employment and income have a significant impact on First Nations community well-being.<sup>40</sup> This study demonstrates the importance of linking objective economic measures to policy decisions, to promote societies that are not only prosperous but healthy and resilient.

With over half of all *Indian Act* First Nations already participating in the FMA, the FMA institutions are well-positioned to work with First Nations governments to determine Indigenous priorities for data gathering, analysis, and governance.

The FMA institutions anticipate using the following strategy as the foundation to a collaborative relationship with First Nations governments:

- 1. Continual consultation between the FMA institutions and First Nations governments from across Canada, with statistical solutions developed through active collaboration**
- 2. Surveys on the quality and direction of statistical services to determine First Nations priorities**
- 3. Data accessibility for all First Nations governments**

# Establishing a Comprehensive Database

Existing datasets are fragmented among several sources, which compounds the data gap. A study from the *Journal of Northern Studies* found that evidence-based policy decisions are limited for many Indigenous populations due to lack of available data.<sup>41</sup> The FMA institutions will solve this problem by **establishing a comprehensive Indigenous economic and financial database**. The FMA institutions will harmonize administrative datasets available from Statistics Canada (including the Census), Indigenous Services Canada, and other departments of government. By combining these existing datasets, the FMA statistical initiative will deliver a wealth of Indigenous economic and financial data resources to First Nations governments and stakeholders.

These datasets will include data from the following sources:

- Detailed Census data organized by First Nations community
- First Nations government financial statements
- Datasets maintained by ISC, including registry data, geographic information, and governance data
- Datasets available publicly via individual First Nations government websites
- Indigenous economic and business datasets published by federal or provincial government departments or Crown corporations
- Economic datasets published by not-for-profit research organizations
- Other publicly available studies and reports categorized by topic



## Advancing Statistical Analysis

Once the existing datasets are collated, the FMA institutions will continue their consultation with First Nations governments and other stakeholders to determine Indigenous priorities for new data gathering and analytical initiatives. Throughout this process, **the FMA institutions will provide ongoing statistical studies and data collection** to First Nations governments to inform evidence-based policy decisions. As an example, a study from the *Journal of Information, Information Technology & Organizations* found a link between investment in information and communications technology and key measures of social capital.<sup>42</sup> Having a comprehensive database with multiple datasets will allow Indigenous leaders to identify these types of associations to better inform policy.

The comprehensive database will provide new opportunities for statistical analysis that can inform evidence-based decision-making on Indigenous priorities for the first time.

These opportunities may include the following research questions:

- **What key factors contribute toward higher levels of socioeconomic well-being?**
- **Does geographic remoteness affect the socioeconomic well-being of Indigenous communities? If so, do the existing transfer-revenue formulas reflect any socioeconomic disparities due to geography?**
- **Does access to financing for First Nations governments result in higher community well-being outcomes? Does the source of financing influence this relationship?**
- **Do certain types of capital asset investment result in stronger socioeconomic outcomes? Do existing capital programs and funding sources target these classes of capital investments?**
- **Is own-source revenue associated with greater long-term social outcomes in Indigenous communities?**
- **What factors contribute towards higher levels of Indigenous language knowledge and the success of Indigenous language revitalization initiatives?**



The FMA Statistical Initiative will conduct evidence-based research to provide more informed economic and fiscal policy recommendations. This will advance the new fiscal relationship and provide meaningful insight in the areas of First Nations economic development, and in advancing the other priorities outlined in the RoadMap, including: development of First Nations community infrastructure, expanded jurisdiction and fiscal powers, and opportunities for aggregation. By working collaboratively with First Nations governments, sister FMA organizations, FNIGC, partners, and stakeholders, the FMA Statistical Initiative will play a key role in making economic reconciliation a reality.

Comprehensive data and statistics for First Nations governments will enable modelling to better plan for economic development; potential business and taxation revenue streams; financing needs to develop community infrastructure; and the potential impacts on employment and income. This can inform First Nations community leaders and their collaborative partners to advance local Indigenous economies.

Advancing the statistical mandate of the FMA institutions is essential to closing the Indigenous economic data and statistical gap and enabling optionality within a new fiscal relationship. First Nations governments and other stakeholders will benefit from a trusted and comprehensive source of Indigenous economic and financial data that can inform policy decisions, while adhering to the principles of Indigenous data ownership and self-determination.

**Advancing the statistical mandate of the FMA institutions is essential to closing the Indigenous economic data and statistical gap and enabling optionality within a new fiscal relationship.**





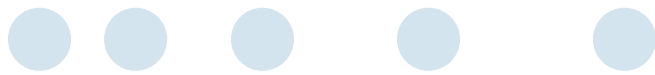
# OPERATIONALIZING THE STATISTICAL INITIATIVE

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**THE EXPANDED MANDATE AND DEVELOPMENT** of statistical capacity within the FMA institutions will follow a three-phase approach and progressively develop its internal capacity, comprehensive data assets, and statistical solution deliverables. This framework provides significant upfront value for First Nations governments and other stakeholders and lays the foundation for the long-term success of this Indigenous-led statistical organization. Table 2 reviews the highlights of each phase.

**TABLE 2: PHASES OF THE FMA STATISTICAL INITIATIVE**

Phase 1: CREATION	Phase 2: EXPANSION	Phase 3: MATURITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amend the FMA to include an economic/fiscal data and statistics mandate</li> <li>• Establish the Statistical Initiative within the FMA institutions</li> <li>• Actively consult with First Nations governments about their economic and fiscal data and statistical needs</li> <li>• Develop collaborative partnerships with existing statistical organizations, including FNIGC</li> <li>• Begin building a comprehensive Indigenous economic and financial database</li> <li>• Ensure data quality, validity, and accessibility that First Nations governments can trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate new datasets that will add value for First Nation leaders and policymakers</li> <li>• Collaborate with partners to grow the economic/fiscal datasets</li> <li>• Expand the number of First Nations engaged in the FMA Statistical Initiative</li> <li>• Support formula-based transfers and equalization that are objective and measure outcomes</li> <li>• Provide evidence-based economic/fiscal policy recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a lead role in advancing Indigenous economic and fiscal policy research</li> <li>• Ongoing outreach with First Nations communities</li> <li>• Synthesize statistical research with the qualitative wisdom within First Nations communities</li> <li>• Having reached maturity – consider establishing an independent economics and fiscal statistical institute, enabled by legislation and with a mandate to work with the FMA institutions</li> </ul>





## PHASE 1: CREATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE INDIGENOUS ECONOMIC/FISCAL DATABASE AND STATISTICAL INITIATIVE WITHIN THE FMA INSTITUTIONS


Phase 1 will involve creating a comprehensive Indigenous economic and financial database and developing statistical capacity within the FMA institutions that will serve First Nations governments and stakeholders. This expanded mandate will meet the needs of First Nations governments and embody the cultural values of Canada's Indigenous peoples. **The first step** is consultation with First Nations governments.

The objectives of this consultation include:

- **Determining the statistical services that First Nations governments and organizations desire**
- **Considering the level of statistical knowledge of First Nations governments, and the types of statistical training/support that they seek**
- **Evaluating what statistical processes are currently being used by First Nations**
- **Determining what barriers exist that limit the use of statistical policy decision-making**

**The second step** is collating publicly available economic and fiscal data relating to First Nations governments and communities, and the establishment of a comprehensive Indigenous economic and financial database. The development of this economic database will be a vital asset as the FMA institutions expand their role in supporting First Nations governments in the creation of new statistical solutions. Datasets will be collated from multiple sources, such as: Census data from Statistics Canada, registry data from Indigenous Services Canada, First Nations government financial statement data, datasets available via individual First Nations governments, and datasets available from other governments or organizations. This approach provides a high value data asset at a relatively low cost.





**Datasets will be collated from multiple sources, such as: Census data from Statistics Canada, registry data from Indigenous Services Canada, First Nations government financial statement data, datasets available via individual First Nations governments, and datasets available from other governments or organizations.**

**The third step** is to deliver statistical solutions to First Nations governments and Indigenous organizations based on the consultation from the first step. The key types of statistical solutions include:

- **The delivery of statistics-informed policy studies to First Nations governments, both Nation-specific studies and broader studies that are applicable to multiple First Nations governments. These studies will be based on consultation from step one, and the existing data collated in step two.**
- **Maintaining a continual feedback loop from First Nations governments to inform ongoing statistical solutions. After each statistical deliverable, the statistical initiative will seek First Nation feedback via a standardized feedback survey. The feedback results will be collected to evaluate the effectiveness of the statistical deliverables. This process sets the statistical services apart from other statistical organizations, as First Nations governments have direct influence on the statistical solution deliverables. This step ensures Indigenous ownership in the statistical study development process, as well as the interpretation of any statistical analysis.**
- **Provision of statistics-informed policy studies to other stakeholders, which can inform all levels of government through an evidence-based policy approach.**

**The fourth step** is to determine what data gaps exist that limit the FMA institutions from delivering the desired statistical services for First Nations governments. The FMA institutions will develop a plan for what data needs to be collected to meet the needs of First Nations governments, as well as working with partners in this data collection process. This plan will inform ongoing expansion of the FMA statistical initiative into Phase 2.

### **Required Support from the Federal Government for Phase 1**

The advancement of statistical capacity will require the federal government of Canada to pass **legislative amendments to the FMA** to expand the mandate of the FMA institutions to include Indigenous economic and financial data collection and statistical analysis. These legislative amendments would also include privacy protections for disaggregated data to protect the data rights of First Nations governments. Aligned with these legislative amendments, the FMA institutions will require **expanded resources** to increase its internal statistical capacity to best serve the First Nations participating in the FMA. The additional resources will be used to hire additional personnel, develop data processing and data storage systems, grow the internal statistical capacity of personnel, and cover FMA participant outreach expenses (e.g., client engagement, travel, developing training tools).

The statistical solutions to be provided will be of interest to First Nations governments across Canada. To maximize buy-in for these statistical solutions, the FMA institutions will request resources to provide statistical support to First Nations governments that are not currently engaged in other FMA activities. This opt-in to statistical services could be funded through a revenue supplement by the federal government to the institutions, based on the number of First Nations governments seeking statistical services.

The federal departments of Indigenous Services Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, and Statistics Canada hold a significant amount of economic and financial data regarding Canada's Indigenous population and governments. The FMA institutions will seek an agreement with these government departments indicating their support of the economic and financial mandate, and an agreement to share their datasets. This will demonstrate the Government of Canada's resolve to support Indigenous control and ownership over their data, and the journey towards economic self-determination.

## PHASE 2: EXPANSION OF DATA AND STATISTICAL SOLUTIONS

In phase 2, the institutions will step beyond data collating and will **identify new datasets to be gathered** based on the needs of First Nations governments identified through the consultations in Phase 1. The FMA institutions will work with a network of collaborating partners to identify which partners are best suited to gather these new datasets. If no collaborating partner is well positioned to collect the identified datasets, the FMA institutions can take on a data gathering role on a project-by-project basis. This will build the comprehensive database and serve the needs of First Nations participating in the FMA.

With an expanded range of Indigenous economic data assets, the FMA institutions will be well positioned to **expand the number of First Nations participating in the statistical initiative**. The FMA institutions will make inquiries to gauge interest among First Nations governments.



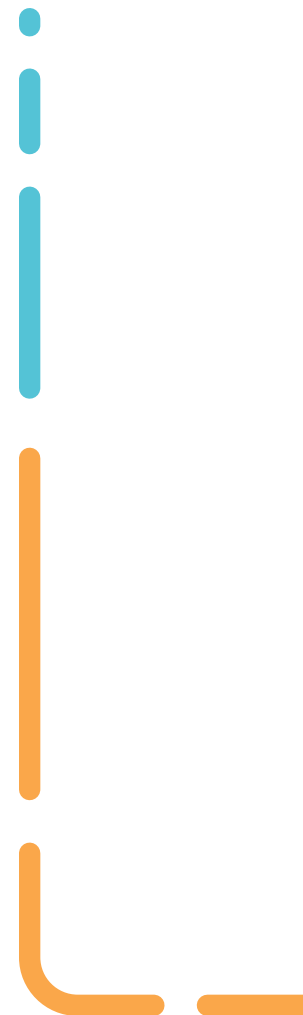
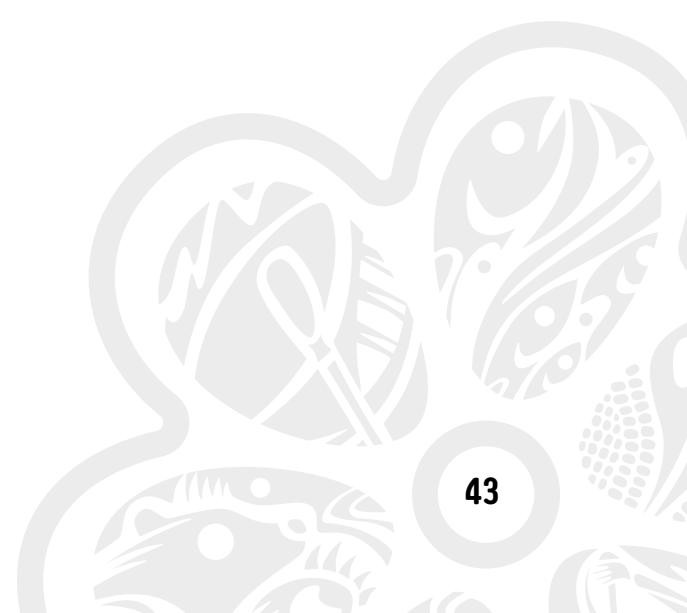
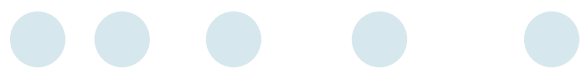
An important type of data for Indigenous policymakers measures the financial health of First Nations governments. A current challenge is the lack of consistency in how financial data is presented in First Nations government audited financial statements. To address this, the FMA institutions will **develop a First Nations Financial Reporting Framework (FNFRF)**. The FNFRF will provide a standardized method for reporting First Nations financial information. This will allow Indigenous leaders to evaluate the financial health of their governments over time and compared to other First Nations governments. A study from Public Administration Quarterly found that local governments who utilize financial ratio analysis make more informed policy decisions<sup>43</sup> to serve their communities.

First Nations governments who opt-in to the FNFRF can be provided with multi-year financial analysis, which could assist in better understanding their financial progress. Outreach can take place with stakeholders to determine if adopting the FNFRF could reduce reporting requirements with other levels of government. If agreeable to FMA participants, anonymized comparative financial figures could also be provided to assist First Nations governments in understanding how their financial situation compares to other First Nations governments (e.g., other governments with similar demographic/geographic characteristics).

**Data accessibility for First Nations governments** is a central principle of the FMA Statistical Initiative. Each First Nations government will have full access to all data about their communities and government. This data will be available in both its raw format, as well as via reports that provide for ease of interpretation and value-add for First Nations governments. Examples can include meaningful economic performance outcomes, financial ratios, per capita measures, and comparatives over time.

The FMA institutions will also take an expanded role in preparing reports and journal articles about Indigenous economic issues and will expand the existing professional and academic literature from an Indigenous perspective. The FMA institutions will become thought leaders on Indigenous economic issues and work collaboratively with partners to advance applied policy research that will serve the needs of First Nations governments.

**Data accessibility for First Nations governments is a central principle of the FMA Statistical Initiative. Each First Nations government will have full access to all data about their communities and government.**





Phase 2 will see the FMA institutions continue expanding internal statistical capacity, grow their data assets, and engage more First Nations governments in evidence-based policy research. The new initiative of developing a First Nations Financial Reporting Framework will also be undertaken. This expanded statistical capacity will position the FMA institutions to move into the third phase.

#### **Required Support from the Federal Government for Phase 2**

The FMA institutions will seek **additional resources** to expand their economic and financial data-gathering operations, statistical service delivery for First Nations governments, data, and analysis services for other levels of government, and the development of a First Nations Financial Reporting Framework. As the data assets grow, further data processing and analysis capacity will be required to continue serving the needs of First Nations governments.

### **PHASE 3: MATURITY OF THE DATA AND STATISTICAL SOLUTIONS AND INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS**

By Phase 3, the FMA institutions will have become the comprehensive source for Indigenous economic and financial data in Canada and a thought leader in Indigenous economic/fiscal research, all while continuing to deliver statistical solutions to First Nations governments. This stronger national presence in Indigenous economic statistics will continue to attract more First Nations governments to actively engage with the statistical services provided by the FMA institutions.

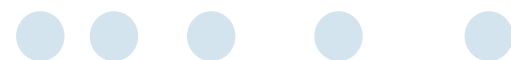
The direction of the statistical initiative will be continually guided by the feedback and needs of First Nations governments. This feedback loop will keep statistical solutions aligned with the real needs of First Nations governments and will maintain Indigenous control over the direction of ongoing data gathering and statistical studies. This Indigenous-aligned focus will provide legitimacy to the FMA institutions in Indigenous economic thought leadership. In a similar manner, they will be a trusted source for economic/fiscal data and statistical analysis for other stakeholders.

**As the data assets grow, further data processing and analysis capacity will be required to continue serving the needs of First Nations governments.**

The insights derived from the FMA Statistical Initiative will shed light on new opportunities for economic development and will build the foundation for evidence-based policy for the priorities outlined in this RoadMap to economic reconciliation. Just as the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development<sup>44</sup> in the United States seeks out the what, where, and why to Indigenous economic advancement, the FMA Statistical Initiative will pursue these questions for First Nations communities in Canada.

Having attained a leadership role in Indigenous economic statistics at a national level, the FMA institutions will start **building international partnerships with economic statistical institutes abroad**. The goal will be to learn from insights abroad and share best practices developed by the statistical initiative with international Indigenous statistical institutes. Indigenous peoples from around the world share many common interests, so building international partnerships will provide value for First Nations governments in Canada and our international counterparts.

Finally, the FMA institutions would consider the establishment of an **independent economics and financial statistical institute**. Having reached a level of maturity as a statistical organization, the goal will be transferring the data and statistical capacity from the statistics initiative to the new institution for the delivery of statistical solutions to Canada's First Nations governments. Establishment of the new institute and transference of material would be evaluated in consultation with First Nations governments, the Government of Canada, and the FMA institutions





# CONCLUSION

**MOST CANADIANS KNOW** that their governments rely on accurate data and statistical information to make decisions that will affect their lives. Most Canadians have access to information that can help them determine whether their governments are doing a good job.

Indigenous Canadians, however, live with **data inequality**. The lack of data on Indigenous Canadians undermines informed decision-making and accountability at all levels of government, producing socioeconomic inequality. It is not a coincidence that Canada's most enduring policy issue is also the issue least informed by data and statistics. For First Nations governments and citizens, the **lack of data has hampered progress and hurt accountability**.

The FMA institutions believe that change is possible and that it starts with better data. This will enable reliable information to promote better decisions and outcomes. Data and statistics will provide a guiding light to a nation lost in the bureaucratic systems of its colonial past. As we walk together on the path of reconciliation, we require the tools to understand where we are and where we are going.



The FMA institutions can provide those tools; but we will require the mandate and the resources to do it. With the resources in place, we will support First Nations governments and stakeholders to make informed decisions by developing a data and statistics initiative. We will focus on gathering and analyzing First Nations government economic and financial data, in partnership with stakeholders, to support decision-making for the benefit of all Canadians. The FMA Statistical Initiative will promote change that has been too long in coming. It will:



- **provide data validity and integrity that can be trusted,**
- **inform better policy decisions, and**
- **enable innovation within a new fiscal relationship, including formula-based transfers and equalization frameworks.**

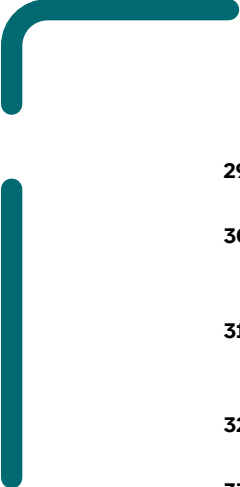

**Change is possible** – with the right foundation. Better information means we can expect better results from all levels of government. The FMA Statistical Initiative will ensure full economic and financial data access to First Nations governments – the data required for self-determination – and mark an important step toward reconciliation. By closing the economic data and statistics gap, we will promote the implementation of UNDRIP, offer greater optionality within a new fiscal relationship, and enable evidence-based decision-making.

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