



Impact Assessment
Agency of Canada

Ontario Region
600-55 York Street
Toronto ON M5J 1R7

Agence d'évaluation
d'impact du Canada

Région de l'Ontario
600-55 rue York
Toronto ON M5J 1R7

June 24, 2020

Sent by email

Michael Fox
Webequie Supply Road Project
michael.fox@indigenouseengagement.com

Dear Michael Fox:

Subject: Trauma-informed and healing-centred engagement methods

Thank you for your email of May 17, 2020, in which you seek clarity on “trauma-informed” and “healing-centred” engagement methods and approaches in the context of federal assessment processes.

The Impact Assessment Agency of Canada (the Agency) encourages proponents to approach Indigenous engagement with reconciliation in mind. This includes being open to needs of groups and entering into relationships without assumptions. For example, if Indigenous groups identify impediments to participation in engagement activities due to current or historical trauma, proponents should seek the Indigenous groups input on preferred engagement strategies or practices that seek to respect this context of trauma and avoid or limit triggers that would impede meaningful engagement activities.

In general, trauma informed and healing-centred practices require awareness of trauma, its prevalence and impacts, the establishment of safe and trustworthy engagement that provides for community choice, and recognition of community resilience, strength and contributions to the process. This requires proponents to listen to Indigenous groups and to adjust engagement to respect their preferred means and methods of engagement. Trauma-informed and healing-centered approaches to engagement can include intentionally designed meeting environments (e.g. sitting in a circle), tailored methods or formats of communication (e.g. adjusting pace of presentation and avoiding technical jargon), or incorporating specific cultural practices into meeting structure when presenting materials or seeking feedback (e.g. prayers). Webequie First Nation is highly encouraged to collaborate with Indigenous groups to determine how proponent engagement can best reflect and incorporate trauma-informed and healing-centred methods and approaches in a way that meets each Indigenous group's unique needs.

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The Agency does not have specific guidance for trauma-informed or healing-centred approaches to engagement for impact assessment. However, to support Webequie First Nation, the Agency has provided the following resources in Appendix 1 of the Guidelines:

- National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health:
<https://www.nccih.ca/34/publications.aspx?sortcode=2.8.10&cat=22>
- Government of Canada: Trauma and violence-informed approaches to policy and practice: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/health-risks-safety/trauma-violence-informed-approaches-policy-practice.html>

Other resources originally designed for application in the health field that may support the Webequie Supply Road Project Team with preparation of trauma-informed and healing-centred engagement methods and approaches include:

- The Agency's *Interim Guidance for Collaboration with Indigenous Peoples in Impact Assessments* presents the Agency approach to working with Indigenous groups in an impact assessment, but this document can also help guide proponents in their own engagement activities. This general guidance seeks to implement trauma-informed and healing-centred engagement approaches, though those terms do not explicitly appear in the guidance. The document can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.canada.ca/en/impact-assessment-agency/services/policy-guidance/practitioners-guide-impact-assessment-act/collaboration-indigenous-peoples-ia.html>
- SAMHSA's *Concept of Trauma and Guidance for Trauma-Informed Approach* provides key principals for a trauma-informed approach and guidance for implementation of a trauma-informed approach. The document can be accessed at the following link: https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf
- Theme 13 of The Calls for Justice arising from *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls* calls for engagement that is trauma-informed and healing-centred to further reduce the harm to Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA people. The document can be accessed at the following link: <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Calls-Web-Version-EN.docx>

- The Mackenzie Valley Review Board's *Perspectives Paper 2020* provides a framework for a Well-being Approach to environmental impact assessment, which proponents and assessment bodies can apply to their respective work to reflect trauma-informed and healing-centred methods and approaches to engagement. The document can be accessed at the following link:
http://reviewboard.ca/sites/default/files/news/files/review_board_perspectives_paper_and_cover_letter_-_april_2020_1.pdf
- EQUIP Health Care's Trauma and Violence-Informed Care (TVIC):
<https://equiphealthcare.ca/equip/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/TVIC-tool-ONTARIO-January-12-2018.pdf>
- The Centre for Disease Control's Infographic on The 6 Guiding Principles to a Trauma Informed Approach:
https://www.cdc.gov/cpr/infographics/6_principles_trauma_info.htm

The answers to the questions of how, when, and in which ways, to meet and engage with Indigenous groups can guide a proponent in ensuring their conduct does not re-traumatize or exacerbate trauma and enables relationship-building supported by a meaningful, two-way dialogue. This guidance generally aligns with best practices for ethical engagement.

IMPORTANT NOTE: The Agency recognizes that the Government of Canada has advised all Canadians to implement social distancing measures, including avoiding close contact with others, to minimize COVID-19 transmission in communities. In consideration that social distancing measures often need extensive preparation and currently take priority, the Agency highlights its current measures and commitments to support your community's COVID 19 response at this time:

- The Agency is currently following *guidelines* that have been issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada and local health authorities:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/guidance-documents.html>;
- The Agency has halted in-person and in-community meetings; when a meeting is unavoidable during the current circumstance, we will conduct those activities through digital communications including: teleconference calls and WebEx as appropriate and to the preference of Indigenous groups to discuss projects; and,

- The Agency remains flexible and able to adapt our conduct as necessary to prioritize the health and safety of communities participating in impact assessments.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 647-291-3721 or through the project email account at *iaac.Webequie.aeic@canada.ca*.

Sincerely,

<Original signed by>

Alexandra Oakes
Project Manager

c.c.: Chief Cornelius Wabasse, Webequie First Nation
Samson James, Webequie First Nation
Craig Wallace, SNC Lavalin
Don Parkinson, SNC Lavalin
Marian Tibor-McMahon, SNC Lavalin