



Culturally Relevant Gender Application Protocol: A Workbook

NWAC's work promoting culturally relevant gender based analysis has culminated in the development of the CRGAP, or the **Culturally Relevant Gender Application Protocol**. This work is generously supported by the Aboriginal Health Transition Fund (AHTF) at the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch of Health Canada.

It began with a series of policy and academic papers, from which a set of guiding principles were gleaned. This was followed by several months of outreach with grassroots women and communities, local and regional AHTF project coordinators, and federal departmental officials. NWAC has endeavoured to see that this workbook reflects the input and insight offered by each and every individual and organization who was engaged in its development.

Native Women's Association of Canada,
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CRGAP Overview

The Culturally Relevant Gender Application Protocol (CRGAP) recognizes the need for gender-based analysis that encompasses the interconnected relationship between culture and gender. For Aboriginal women, this creates a more meaningful

and relevant analysis that better reflects historical and contemporary contexts and lived realities.

Funders, policymakers, researchers, and analysts are encouraged to use this workbook as a guide to complement their existing processes.

The CRGAP is an easy to use instructional style booklet that is versatile enough to be incorporated into any process, at any stage. The question oriented format sets out specific ways to support engagement and full participation by different sectors of the community with goals of creating more relevant, effective and equitable policies and programs.

The CRGAP seeks to broaden perspectives and challenge preconceived notions of culture and gender in order to disrupt stereotypical perceptions of Aboriginal women and to instead engage them in the processes that ultimately affect their life opportunities and chances.

The CRGAP is intended to achieve three "desired outcomes", as follows:

1. **Equity in participation**
2. **Balanced communication**
3. **Equality in results**

The workbook sets out how each of these "desired outcomes" can be achieved. Users should complete each section thoroughly, track progress, record outcomes, and revisit as necessary. A glossary of terms appears at the end of the workbook and should be used for reference and contextual purposes.

Each of the three "desired outcomes" listed above has four corresponding sections to be completed by the user: Actions, Tracking, Outcomes, and Best Practices. A brief description of what each of these entails is as follows:

Actions

A series of actions that should be taken in the application of the CRGAP are listed under each desired outcome in the form of questions. The questions are intended to prompt the user to

undertake specific activities in order to achieve the ‘desired outcome’. For example,

- To achieve **Equity in Participation** the user is required to conduct outreach and meaningfully engage different sectors of the community in the development of the research, policy or program at hand (respecting culture and gender perspectives).
- To achieve **Balanced Communication** the user is required to collect data and information related to the issue to formulate accurate, evidence based messaging. The user is also reminded of the importance of ethically sound research methodologies.
- To achieve **Equality in Results**, the user is required to consider how the application has improved the process. While true equality can only be realized in the longer term, the user is challenged to identify how they’ve actively participated in the call to action.

Tracking & Performance Measures

A series of questions appear under this heading that require the user to track their progress quantitatively. Answers to these questions provide a way to monitor or evaluate actions taken to achieve the desired outcome. Good tracking practices can validate final outcomes and address gaps in information.

Outcomes

A series of qualitative-type questions appear under this heading that can also be used to monitor progress but are intended to delve deeper into the process. These questions are intended to assist in the analysis of outcomes and elicit action-oriented thinking.

Best Practices & Lessons Learned

Evaluating and documenting lessons learned provides users with an opportunity to revisit the process. The objective here is to learn from mistakes and avoid repeating them.

Equity in Participation

A wide range of social, demographic, and economic indicators paint a dire picture of Aboriginal women’s realities; if Canada intends to address these issues, Aboriginal women need to be *full and equal partners* in developing the solutions. Aboriginal women need to be engaged in economic development initiatives,

political decision making processes, leadership activities, and the “political economy of everyday life.”¹

Equitable participation is important because all policies impact men and women differently.

Historically for instance, health research and clinical trials were conducted on men only creating a total failure to meet women’s health needs. Different biological or hormonal differences (including pregnancy) were labeled syndromes, placing women at great risk because the findings were derived from male oriented trials only. The male condition became the “gold standard” and applied to women, rendering false and at times, dangerous results.

Funding parity can enable equitable participation given Aboriginal women’s socio economic realities. Childcare, transportation, food allowance, and compensation for time away from work are some basic “allowances” and may be required for Aboriginal women to participate equitably. Participation rates can be measured quantitatively and qualitatively. Participation is measured by how well it is enabled understanding that Aboriginal women are more likely to participate if:

1. Options for participation are provided; and
2. Obstacles are removed.

A variety of outreach methods should be used and these methods should engage Aboriginal women where they live, work, and raise their families. Participation can be measured quantitatively and tracked by identifying reasons for participation and non participation, and modifying methods and options for participation accordingly. The following considerations are necessary to ensure full and equitable participation occurs:

¹ Aboriginal Women in Canada: Strategic Research Directions for Policy Development, Madeleine Dion Stout and Gregory D. Kipling, March 1998

Actions

What groups/individuals were approached in the outreach?

How and why were they chosen? Were they the most appropriate participants?

Explain what obstacles were encountered in attempts to achieve equity in participation and what measures were taken to address the obstacles?

TIPS: It's important to establish a broad based approach to outreach, particularly during the planning process.

List the groups targeted and remember that meaningful engagement is something that occurs at the onset of a project; consultation occurs well after decisions are made. Due to the history of exclusion and imposition, Aboriginal people should be engaged, not consulted.

Further to this, different groups of people will be engaged for different reasons. It should be established why a particular group of people were chosen to participate in order to validate outcomes. And finally, there will almost always be obstacles to participation. Users should be ready to adjust their approach and methods of participation to suit.

Consider the difference between equal and equitable funding

Tracking & Performance Measures

How many people attended?

What was the gender representation?

How many different organizations participated?

How many organizations and individuals who participated had GBA expertise?

TIPS: In almost any government funded initiative success should be measured quantitatively. Be sure to track this information as it happens to illustrate how successful the outreach was, and to gauge how successful the initiative should be based on those outreach efforts.

The question regarding GBA expertise is intended to prevent “tokenism”. In order ensure cultural and gender relevant outcomes in this process, those engaged should possess GBA expertise. Simply having an Aboriginal woman present during this process does not mean that Aboriginal women’s perspectives will be well represented.

REMINDER

The treatment of women and men identically will NOT produce similar outcomes.

Outcomes

What type of feedback did you receive from participants?

What actions / next steps were identified that reflect equity in participation?

How culturally diverse were the participants?

How do you know gender roles were valued in the process? (i.e., do the outcomes reflect gender and culture differences and perspectives?)

How were Aboriginal women’s voices heard? (i.e., in the outcomes)

How do you know equity in participation was achieved?

TIP: A qualitative measuring scheme should be incorporated into the process that involves tracking other types of information such as the feedback received by participants and the types of actions and/or recommendations they develop (these should be culturally sensitive and gender aware if equitable participation was achieved).

Best practices & Lessons Learned

What have you learned in this process?

What might you do differently in another situation?

What might you do the same?

TIP: Best practices are incorporated by modifying methods and options of engagement to fit the need. It is important to reflect on the process used to achieve the desired level of participation (ask yourself how well the process worked; what aspects of it didn't work, and what parts of the process you would change). There will almost always be lessons to learn and approaches to adjust; these should be documented and shared as best practices.

Balanced Communication

The need for “balanced communication” ties into the second principle of the CRGAP related to maintaining balance and equilibrium. It has been through the social construction of a male-centered version of the universe, and the denial of women’s identity (creating disconnect between race and gender) that had severe negative consequences on health and well being. The imposition of a western, patriarchal worldview on culture and gender can be directly linked to the poor health status of Aboriginal people today, with Aboriginal women experiencing disproportionate levels of poor health.

Historically, Aboriginal women commanded the highest respect in their communities as the givers of life and the keepers of the traditions, practices and customs. With colonization, communities were

forced to adopt European norms of male dominance and control over women.² Aboriginal women were systematically driven from their place in society and through various laws, policies and Christian edicts,³ a demeaning and demoralizing portrayal became the identity of the Aboriginal woman.

Revitalizing the value of Aboriginal women’s roles in society, in a large part can be achieved through good communications. Communicating a balanced message involves consideration a number of things, including:

1. What is being communicated,
2. Who is communicating it,
3. To whom it is being communicated, and
4. From whose perspective it is being communicated.

Communications is a powerful tool used to influence social conscience and promote particular views and perspectives. While it is true that the views and

“In the past almost all research efforts were filtered by Eurocentricism, research that was interpreted by their views rather than by Indigenous views...”

Jacobs, 2000

perspectives typically promoted are those of the dominant society, or the dominant class within that society, with the implementation of these protocols subtle shifts in the messaging should result and a more balanced portrayal of Aboriginal women will be presented.

Ensuring that Aboriginal women are the drivers of information regarding their unique needs,

circumstances and lived realities is the most effective and respectful way of reconciling the longstanding imbalances in communications. They should play a central role in rebalancing messages. Communicating information accurately and will create more appropriate responses by society, and reduce apathy to the often alarming realities surrounding Aboriginal women’s lives.

² Martha Montour, “Iroquois Women’s Rights with respect to matrimonial property on Indian Reserves” 4 Canadian Native Law Reporter 1 [1987]; Robert A. Williams, “Gendered Checks and Balances: Understanding the Legacy of White Patriarchy in an American Indian Cultural Context” (1990) 4 Ga. L. Rev. 1019.) Quoted from “The Historical Context” (23 April 2004)

³ See, for example, F. Pannekoek, “The Churches and the Social Structure in the Red River Area 1818–1870” (Ph.D. Thesis, Queen’s University 1973) at 154–90.

The following actions must be undertaken to develop balanced, relevant messaging that accurately reflects the realities. Developing a balanced message requires research.

Actions

What do we know to be true? What are the facts? (i.e., identify data/information that is already available)

What do we suspect to be true but lack the proof? (i.e., identify what information / data needs to be collected?)

Who should collect it? Who should interpret it? Who should communicate it?

Who is the target audience? Why?

What methodology used to collect information (research methodology)? Why?

Demonstrate how the methodology was ethically sound.

What steps were taken to validate the data?

How was community involved in:

A. Identifying the need for the data collection

B. The collection and interpretation

C. Dissemination

Explain what obstacles were encountered in information/data collection and what measures were taken to address the obstacles?

TIP: Aboriginal women should be equitably engaged through the collection, interpretation, and communication of information. Keep in mind that messages may need to be adjusted based on who the target audience is. How information is collected is an important aspect of communications and can impact the quality of the messaging. Gaps in the sources of information will result in gaps in the message.

“In order to address issues like violence, policy, programs and services must incorporate and reflect the evidence.”

*Sisters in Spirit
2010 Research Findings*

Tracking & Performance Measures

How many data sources were used (secondary)?

What was your sample size (primary)?

How many people/orgs were involved in the design, collection, analysis, dissemination of data/information?

How many people/organizations/communities received the data/information/communications?

How many reports were generated as a result of this data/information/communication effort?

TIP: Both primary and secondary sources of information are important in the development of balanced communications. This is critical in the context of the CRGAP given that Aboriginal women’s perspectives have been largely ignored within both Canadian and Aboriginal society.⁴

⁴ Canadian state, Canadian society in general and the Aboriginal male leadership have paid scant attention to their particular needs and concerns. (*Aboriginal Women in Canada: Strategic Research*

Hence, Aboriginal women would act as “primary” sources of information, used to build upon “secondary”.

Outcomes

How was the data/information used to inform this issue/policy/program?

What actions / next steps were identified that reflect equity in participation?

How was the data/information used to inform gender differences and respect for Aboriginal diversity (between & among First Nations, Metis, and Inuit)

Do the outcomes reflect the evidence?

Directions for Policy Development, Madeleine Dion Stout and Gregory D. Kipling, March 1998)

TIP: Now that you have engaged the relevant sectors of the community, it is important to show how their input has informed the policy or program. Policies that are developed using this inclusive, open approach will be more reflective of the need and more relevant to the affected populations.

Best practices & Lessons Learned

What have you learned in this process?

What might you do the same/differently in another situation?

Did the data/information make outcomes more reflective of gender perspectives?

TIP: Each and every time you reflect on the process, these standard questions should be posed. For communications there will be additional questions.

Equality in Results

If used properly and consistently, the CRGAP acts as an accountability framework. It questions basic assumptions, gathers data, and furthers understanding of how systemic factors affect women and men differently.

The CRGAP has goals of creating more relevant effective policies and better outcomes for both genders. It evaluates the changing the nature of relationships and the extent to which progress has led to substantive improvements in peoples' lives. The high rate of violence experienced by Aboriginal women is a direct reflection of a lack of community health and well-being. Changing this situation, and Aboriginal women's realities, is at the heart of CRGAP application.

In achieving "equity in participation" and "balanced communication", the role of Aboriginal women is described as central. Similarly, to achieve "*Equality in Results*", building accountability and good governance, Aboriginal women's roles are also central.⁵ Equal outcomes can be achieved through the translation of knowledge; new evidence-based knowledge, over time, will bring about desired shifts in societal attitude.

Revitalizing Aboriginal women's roles within existing governance structures and decision making processes and valuing their unique perspectives will increase the likelihood of achieving equal outcomes.

Results (outcomes) can be measured and should be tracked over both the short and long term. This is carried out through the monitoring of the assumptions that were challenged (short term) and the assumptions that were changed (long term).

It is important to remember the context from which inequality has come about for Aboriginal women and understand that governance systems and structures prior to colonization were for the most part matriarchal. The matriarchal aspects of our societies were eliminated with the imposition of western norms of male dominance and control. This is the context from which the CRGAP needs to be applied.

The following actions should be taken to fully apply the CRGAP, and should be revisited regularly.

Actions

How does the issue (policy, program, etc) affect men and women differently?

What changes need to occur with the current situation? What has triggered this analysis, and what measures should be taken to ensure the desired changes occur?

How can the outcomes translate into action? What actions need to be taken?

If this policy or program is implemented, how will you know you have been successful? What has changed? How are the changes going to be measured and tracked?

Who will be engaged in defining "success"?

⁵ Canada-Aboriginal Peoples Roundtable Sectoral Follow-up Session on Accountability for Results NWAC, 2005

How will individuals/communities/ leadership be involved in the implementation?

Whose responsibility is it to implement? Why?

TIP: This is the final stage of implementation and perhaps the most difficult. It involves changing outcomes for the long term and seeing a decline (and ultimate elimination) of violence against Aboriginal women.

Tracking & performance measures

How many programs/policies have been developed/impacted/changed?

How many individuals were engaged?

How many were affected?

How many departments are collaborating on development / assessment / implementation?

How have people's attitudes towards Aboriginal women changed?

Outcomes

How have the diversity of voices been heard? How has meaningful change occurred? How have Aboriginal women been empowered through the process?

How has this process brought about more relevant, meaningful outcomes?

How was the policy/program/etc evaluated?

What accountability mechanism has been put into place to ensure equality in results over the long term?

How will progress be tracked? Who will track it? Who will revisit?

Best practices & Lessons Learned

What can be learned from an evaluation of the outcome/program/project/policy?

What are the next steps?

Who is responsible for “seeing this through”?

When should it be revisited?

How can accountability be achieved?

In the application of the CRGAP, did the user gain understanding as to how Aboriginal women’s realities are perpetuated?

Conclusion

The devastating effects of colonization are, in many cases, compounded with each generation. Youth suicide is an extreme example of current community-level trauma that can be attributed to colonialism, but one that truly reflects the magnitude. The mental health impacts of colonization alone have devastated families, communities, and even nations. Undoing this damage will not occur with any immediacy. Patience and thoughtful actions are needed. We need to be strong and steadfast in our commitment to radically transform the health and socio-economic conditions, opportunities, and outcomes of Aboriginal women. The revitalization of the value of Aboriginal women's roles will breathe new life into family, community, and nation.

The CRGAP emphasizes the need for change within processes that occur in both Canadian and Aboriginal society. It is understood that change begins with the individual; however, it should also be known that the overarching, long term goals of the CRGAP can only be achieved through structural and systemic change. Governments, systems, and institutions should intentionally undertake CRGBA as a basic recognition of human rights, and a desire to remember how much Aboriginal women have and can bring to creating health and well-being, not only for themselves, but their families, communities and the broader society.

Glossary of Terms

Gender

Cultural relevance

Equity

Equality

Consultation

Engagement
