



Report to Community 2025

September 30, 2025



NATIVE CHILD
AND FAMILY SERVICES
OF TORONTO



The NCFST Rights Relations Agreement

Toward a New Governance Model

In 2022, Native Child and Family Services of Toronto (NCFST) began a deliberate shift away from a hierarchical leadership structure toward a governance model rooted in the traditional governance systems of this territory.

Over 2023 and 2024, this transformative work was carried out with the guidance of Knowledge Carriers, Elders, Indigenous scholars, and community voices, and with the vision of our ancestors and the intentions of our founding board members at heart.

Guided by the Seven Grandfather Teachings

Today, in 2025, we are honoured to work as a Leadership Council, practicing shared decision-making and implementing traditional practices guided by our shared values - the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

Throughout this year, we have walked together with the NCFST Elders Advisory Council to deepen our understanding of how to live these teachings in every aspect of our work.

The NCFST Right Relations Agreement is a living document that reflects this commitment. It sets out how NCFST staff practice and serve in ways that honour Indigenous ways of being and the distinct experiences of the community we serve.

Guided by the enduring wisdom of the Seven Grandfather Teachings, we remain committed to service excellence. These values also ground us in our privacy and research work. Recognizing its richness and importance, we commit to safeguard community data with care, integrity, and accountability.

With humility and care, we share this agreement with our community and agency partners.

NCFST Leadership Council
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Zaag'idwin (Love)

The Eagle flies closest to creator, its strength allows it to carry all the teachings on its winged back. The Eagle sees from great heights, and teaches us that love brings us into closer connection with all of the teachings and all of creation.

The Eagle's expansive view encourages us to see ourselves and the world from a connected and peaceful perspective. The Eagle reminds us that in every interaction, there is opportunity for peaceful engagement guided by free and unconditional love for self and all of creation.

We approach conversations, each other, and community from a place of compassionate inquiry, kindness and care.



Minaadendamowin (Respect)

The Buffalo calls us to honour all of creation. The Buffalo gives its entire being to sustain human life. It teaches us that respect is mutual and reciprocal. To receive respect, we must also give it. The Buffalo's selflessness shows us how to live in harmony with all of creation.

With the Buffalo, we hold space for a diversity of experiences and perspectives. We honour the teachings of this territory shared with us through Elders, Knowledge Carriers, animals and the Land. We practice them in all aspects of who we are.



Aakdewin (Bravery)

The Bear guides us to approach life with courage and integrity. It calls us to face ourselves, moving beyond doubt and anxiety to make difficult but necessary decisions. The Bear reminds us to bravely rely on our inner guidance and the wisdom of our ancestors to remember who we are and act accordingly. It teaches us to stand up for our beliefs, speaking out against colonial injustice and acting rightly even when it is easier to adhere to colonial norms.

In living this way, we practice shared decision-making and honour Indigenous governance strategies, even when they are not recognized or supported by colonial structures.



Debwewin (Truth)

The turtle teaches us to live with care and intention, showing that truth is found in the way we move through life. Its slow, deliberate pace reminds us that the journey matters as much as the destination. By connecting with the wisdom of the turtle we learn patience, humility, and thoughtful living. Guided by these gifts, we walk in relationship with those we serve, fostering genuine connection and mutual understanding, moving at the pace of the community.

We understand that relationships impact outcomes. The turtle also reminds us that walking in true kinship requires acknowledging the harms caused by the systems we have inherited and committing to restoring Indigenous ways of being in our words and actions.

Gwayakwaadiziwin (*Honesty*)



Honesty is living in alignment with our values, being genuine, trustworthy, and acting with integrity. It calls us to speak the truth, even when it is uncomfortable, and to listen to the truths of others with an open heart and humility. Honesty is acknowledging our place in the world and taking accountability for the systems we have inherited, moving through life with empathy and respect for all of creation.

The Sabe reminds us to walk tall in truth. Integrity can only come from honesty. When we are truthful with ourselves and with others, we walk in a good way, grounded in respect, humility, and accountability.

We tell the truth, even if it is uncomfortable. We listen to those telling us their truths with open and humble hearts. We are accountable for how the systems we have inherited work today.

Dabaadendiziwin (*Humility*)



The wolf lives for the pack rather than for the individual. Its wisdom reminds us that every being is a sacred and integral part of creation. It teaches us to understand our place in the world while honouring our inter-dependence with all things. Its devotion to the pack shows how balance and cooperation strengthen both ourselves and the communities we are part of.

Guided by the teachings of the wolf, we recognize our roles in the lives of others, consider the impact of our words and actions, and walk with reverence and care. We recognize what we know and do not know. We acknowledge when we make mistakes and work to resolve them with humility, kindness, and care.

Nibwaakaawin (*Wisdom*)



The beaver teaches us to use our gifts and knowledge wisely for the benefit of all. Just as the beaver carefully builds lodges and dams that work in harmony with the land, we are called to act with foresight, thinking of the wellbeing of future generations. Wisdom is not only knowing, it is the thoughtful use of what we have learned, applied with care and respect.

We recognize that the wisdom of the circle is far stronger than the wisdom of any one individual. We listen with openness and contribute our thoughts with humility, enhancing collective wisdom and growth.

The beaver's work reminds us to live sustainably, nurture the world around us, and collaborate with others, honouring the strengths and gifts each brings to the circle. In following this teaching, we walk in balance, guided by humility, foresight, and responsibility to all of creation.



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Data with Purpose

At NCFST we have a profound appreciation for the importance of community data and its security. Data can revitalize languages, cultural practices, rebuild traditions and create visibility where it did not formerly exist.

In short, the availability of high quality of data can change lives for whole communities. The community data we collect through service delivery and targeted research helps us understand the community that we serve in order to deliver programs critical for Indigenous families in Toronto.

Decolonizing Research Practices

Under our new leadership, NCFST has dispensed with participation in non-Indigenous research projects opting to work with exclusively Indigenous researchers who see us as co-development partners.

Researchers must establish, both to leadership and our community councils, how their projects provide a tangible benefit for the community. Researchers are also expected to participate in reciprocity by way of financial reimbursement and access to academic resources. In this way, NCFST holds researchers and the academy accountable for their processes ensuring full decolonization from start to finish.

Transparency in Privacy

Similarly, our fully transparent privacy program includes regular file access audits, breach reporting to government oversight bodies and notifications directly to community members, disclosure and correction services for stored data as well as a highly responsive complaints process ensure misuse of data is identified and corrected immediately.



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