

Cultural Sensitivity Statement on Indigenous Identity Verification

The Indigenous Curatorial Collective (ICCA) acknowledges the deep and ongoing trauma experienced by Indigenous communities because of colonial practices such as the Sixties Scoop, residential schools, and the forced removal of children from their families through adoption. Many Indigenous individuals were displaced from their communities, cultures, and languages, and now seek to reconnect and reclaim their identity. We understand that this path of reconnection is personal, complicated, and often painful.

However, as an organization dedicated to supporting and advocating for Indigenous artists, the ICCA also recognizes the importance of ensuring that spaces, opportunities, and resources designated for Indigenous peoples are protected from those who may falsely claim Indigenous identity (often referred to as "pretendians"). This is a difficult and sensitive issue, but one that requires clear policies and procedures in order to maintain the integrity of our work and our community.

Guiding Principles:

- **Respect and Empathy:** We will approach all identity verification processes with respect and empathy, acknowledging the complex histories of colonization, forced displacement, and the loss of cultural connection that many Indigenous individuals have experienced.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** We understand that identity is not always tied to legal documentation, and we will approach every inquiry with cultural sensitivity, understanding that some individuals may not have access to formal proof of their heritage due to historical circumstances.
- **Verification, Not Exclusion:** Our goal is not to exclude those seeking to reconnect with their Indigenous roots, but to protect Indigenous spaces from those who may misuse them for personal gain. We strive to create a balance that honors authentic reclamation journeys while safeguarding the resources meant for Indigenous peoples.

How We Ask for Proof: When an individual applies for membership or funding through the ICCA and claims an Indigenous identity, we will request documentation or community acknowledgment to support this claim. This process will be handled with the utmost care to ensure that it is not seen as an attack or an attempt to invalidate anyone's experience.

- **Acceptable Forms of Proof:** This can include status cards, Métis membership cards, tribal enrollment records, letters of support from recognized Indigenous communities, or

any other documentation that verifies a connection to a specific Indigenous nation or community.

- **Collaborating with Indigenous Communities:** When necessary, we will work in collaboration with Indigenous governments, councils, and community elders to verify claims, ensuring that our processes are aligned with the values and norms of Indigenous nations.

Lateral Violence and Prevention: We are aware that questioning an individual's Indigenous identity can sometimes lead to lateral violence, which is when members of marginalized groups direct aggression towards each other rather than addressing the broader systems of oppression. To mitigate this risk, we commit to:

- **Confidentiality:** All inquiries and identity verification processes will be kept confidential to protect the dignity and privacy of those involved.
- **Clear Communication:** We will clearly communicate the reasons for our identity verification process, emphasizing that it is intended to protect Indigenous spaces and resources, not to question the lived experiences of those seeking to reconnect with their heritage.
- **Support for Reconnection:** We will offer support and guidance for individuals who are in the process of reconnecting with their Indigenous roots, encouraging them to continue building relationships with their communities.

Disclaimer: The Indigenous Curatorial Collective (ICCA) is not a legal authority over who does or does not have Indian status, land claims agreements, tribal enrollment, or other proof of citizenship and cannot remove status from its members. The ICCA will collaborate with Indigenous (and non-Indigenous) governments, councils, and nations when necessary to determine the status of its members. The ICCA reserves the right to terminate a membership with the collective at its discretion if it is found that false identity claims have been made.