THE DATA MATTER

CRDCN QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the fall issue of *The Data Matter*!

In this issue, we're happy to present an introduction to our colleagues at the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC). In this article you'll learn about their history, the training they provide and even a couple of opportunities to take part in sessions with them in October 2024.

Next, we spoke to one of our newest Academic Directors, Dr. Bernard Duncker, interim leader of the SouthWestern Ontario Research Data Centre (SWORDC) based at the University of Waterloo. We chatted about the RDC's recent renovations, its position as a Hub for the forthcoming virtual Research Data Centre Network, and their search for a full-time director of the SWORDC.

Lastly, we look at the monumental year ahead, in which the CRDCN will celebrate its 25th anniversary and commemorate a quarter-century of partnership with Statistics Canada.

Thank you for reading and we wish you the best as the fall academic season gets underway.

Ryan Murphy
Editor, *The Data Matter*

Getting to know our colleagues: Q&A with FNIGC

In the second edition of our "Getting to know our colleagues" series, we sat down with our colleagues at the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) to discuss their history, strategy, future goals and what researchers can learn from their offerings.

If you are a researcher interested in taking part in the joint CRDCN-FNIGC webinars happening in October please click here.

Q: It's my understanding that FNIGC's work on data sovereignty goes back to 1996. Can you let our readers know more about how the goals of FNIGC have evolved over time?

A: FNIGC became an independent, incorporated non-profit entity on April 22, 2010, but our data sovereignty mission began in 1996 when a National Steering Committee was created by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) as part of their effort to design a new national First Nations health survey. This was in response to a decision from the federal government to exclude First Nations people living on reserve from three major population surveys.

The first fruits of the Steering Committee appeared in 1997, when the *First Nations Inuit Regional Longitudinal Health Survey* Pilot report was published. In 1998, the Steering Committee created The First Nations Principles of OCAP® during a meeting in Halifax, NS. The acronym OCAP® stands for ownership, control, access, and possession.

In 2009, the AFN Chiefs-in-Assembly passed a Resolution (#48/2009) which mandated the creation of the First Nations Information Governance Centre, a stand-alone non-profit intended to replace the First Nations Information Governance Committee. In the years since, FNIGC's mandate as an incorporated, non-profit organization has evolved, but it remains committed to producing quality research and information that will contribute to First Nations achieving data sovereignty.

Q: Can you tell us more about the First Nations Data Governance Strategy?

A: The First Nations Data Governance Strategy (FNDGS) is a response to decades of advocacy by First Nations to own and control their data and information.

In 2016, during the Assembly of First Nations' Annual General Assembly, First Nations leaders endorsed a Resolution (Resolution #57/2016) that recognized Indigenous data sovereignty as a cornerstone of nation rebuilding. The Resolution directed the federal government to fund: the development of a national First Nations data governance strategy, the establishment of a First Nation data governance champion in each region, and the development of fully functional regional First Nations information government centres (RIGCs).

FNIGC ⟩ CGIPN

First Nations Information Governance Centre
Le Centre de gouvernance de l'information des Premières Nations

In response, the federal government's Budget 2018 earmarked $2.5 million to support the FNIGC's design of a national data governance strategy and coordination of efforts to establish RIGCs and data champion teams (DCTs).

The Strategy was submitted to Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) in March 2020, offering a viable path for First Nations to achieve data sovereignty in alignment with their respective world views, addressing numerous recommendations and calls to action and enabling federal mandates like the new fiscal relationship and the devolution of services.

In 2021, the federal government set aside $73.5 million over three years for Indigenous-led data strategies, including $51.1 million to FNIGC "to continue work towards the development and implementation of a First Nations Data Governance Strategy."

The FNDGS articulates a strategic framework, a long-term vision, desired outcomes, guiding principles,

and key pillars for action for First Nations-led data governance and stewardship.

It centres around building data capacities at the local, regional, and national levels, and lays out in detail priority areas of intervention where First Nations' capacities must be built. Each "pillar for action" defines which data function and corresponding capacity should be built and why, as well as the paths that need to be taken to deliver moving forward.

The end goal of the Strategy is to establish a national network of fully functional, expert-driven RIGCs that will provide shared data and statistical services to all First Nations communities, their governments, and their political and service delivery organizations.

The network is intended to, over time, support a robust ecosystem of First Nations-led organizations that operate in various sectors, and who have expertise in those areas, such as in First Nations health, child and family services, economic development, and more.

Q: What can researchers learn by participating in OCAP® or other training?

A: The First Nations Principles of OCAP® establish how First Nations' data and information will be collected, protected, used, or shared. Standing for ownership, control, access, and possession, OCAP® is a tool to support strong information governance on the path to First Nations data sovereignty. These principles also provide a framework in which researchers can respect and make space for First Nations data sovereignty in their own research.

For those looking to work with First Nations, or interacting with First Nations data, and to develop a respectful relationship, having a solid understanding of the OCAP® principles, and other related key concepts, is necessary.

By participating in FNIGC's ground-breaking online course, The Fundamentals of OCAP®, researchers can learn about First Nations self-determination, self-governance, and collective rights through the framework of the OCAP® Principles. This welcoming and culturally engaging course takes learners on a journey of discovery of the importance of First Nations ownership, control, access, and possession.

For those looking for an opportunity to engage in dialogue about OCAP® and First Nations data sovereignty with facilitators and colleagues, FNIGC also offers OCAP® workshops. These four-hour workshops provide researchers with a safe space to explore how OCAP® can be applied in the work they do.

By participating in any of FNIGC's learning opportunities, researchers can express their commitment to Reconciliation by demonstrating their willingness to increase their knowledge, understanding, and respect for First Nations data sovereignty and the First Nations Principles of OCAP®.

Q: What future goals does FNIGC have?

A: In the nearly 30 years since FNIGC began its journey, we remain committed to supporting and promoting data sovereignty for First Nations, now and for seven generations to come.

What's changed is the scope and scale of our work, which includes our foundational survey initiatives and Knowledge Translation efforts, to the work that our National Data Champion Team is doing to advance Phase 1 of the FNDGS, and the cutting-edge work being advanced by our Data Sovereignty Research Collaborative (DSRC, or The Collaborative), a new space at FNIGC for applied research and creative inquiry into First Nations data sovereignty.

We also are looking into expanding our education and training resources, with new courses to complement our popular and award-winning The Fundamentals of OCAP® online course.

What you need to know

- FNIGC's data sovereignty mission began in 1996.
- The acronym OCAP® stands for ownership, control, access and possession
- FNIGC and CRDCN are offering two online training sessions in October 2024.

Exciting New Opportunity for Waterloo Faculty

As the academic calendar turns a new page and another school year begins, the Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN) has also experienced some exciting new beginnings, welcoming some new Academic Directors to serve as leaders of Research Data Centres (RDCs) and as our on-campus champions of the kinds of quality microdata that Statistics Canada houses and makes accessible via the RDCs.

The SWORDC facility on the campus of the University of Waterloo.
Photo: SWORDC

Firstly, the CRDCN extends its appreciation and thanks to the outgoing Academic Directors: Denis Lajoie of the Université de Moncton; Eric Yergeau of the Université de Sherbrooke; David Zarifa of Nipissing University; Shannon Freeman from the University of Northern British Columbia; and Stéphanie Lluis of University of Waterloo. Your time and dedication to the CRDCN, to the RDC and to researchers had been so valuable.

In that same vein, the CRDCN welcomes the newest Academic Directors: Véronique Chadillon-Farinacci of the Université de Moncton; Simon Décary of the Université de Sherbrooke; Leandro Freylejer, from the University of Northern British Columbia; and Amir Erfani of Nipissing University.

We also welcome Harminder Guliani, stepping in at the University of Regina while Rozzet Jurdi-Hage is on leave and Bernard Duncker, taking the reins as interim Academic Director at the University of Waterloo.

Dr. Duncker, who is a Professor of Biology and the Associate Vice-President, Research and International at the University of Waterloo, is now leading the search for the permanent Academic Director at the South-Western Ontario Research Data Centre (SWORDC) hosted at Waterloo.

His plan now is to focus his efforts on finding a full-time leader for the substantially renovated SWORDC that was designed with the more than 80 SWORDC researchers from across Waterloo and neighbouring universities in mind. "The renovations have had a very positive impact with researchers commenting how much the space has improved, including the lighting, new chairs, ergonomic sit-stand desks, updated colours and increased open space," says Duncker.

Duncker also elaborated upon the expectations of the next SWORDC Academic Director. Of course, since the incumbent will be interacting with students, faculty and academic staff, they should have experience with those interactions and leadership situations. They should also have strong communication and organizational skills, and knowledge of Statistics Canada's data holdings, policies and procedures.

In addition, he notes, the successful candidate should have knowledge of SWORDC and CRDCN aims, structure and operation. For instance, researchers at SWORDC mainly focus on the areas of economics, health and wellbeing, and education.

Lastly, the most significant development impacting researchers currently accessing Statistics Canada data holdings via SWORDC is that it will be one of the first RDCs to join the virtual Research Data Centre (vRDC), which is the upgraded nationwide network under

construction right now. In fact, Waterloo is a key Hub for the CRDCN's vRDC network, with major infrastructure having been installed there and brought online in 2023-24 in preparation for the vRDC. The vRDC allows current and future SWORDC researchers with eligible projects to not only be able to request remote access to the data holdings from approved workstations within Canada but will also benefit from the increased computing power that will improve speed, collaboration features, and access to software. So, Academic Directors coming on board now will want to have a passion for shepherding the next generation of re-searchers through innovative and exciting changes on the horizon.

With the existing and upcoming improvements in infrastructure it will be an amazing and important time for researchers at SWORDC. "We are here to serve the research community and encourage any inquiries about SWORDC!" Duncker says.

If you have any questions about the CRDCN, the SWORDC or any of the RDCs in the CRDCN network, please email info@crdcn.ca or visit our website.

What you need to know

- The CRDCN has recently welcomed six new Academic Directors.
- The SWORDC is currently searching for a full-time Academic Director.
- Renovations were recently completed at the SWORDC facility at the University of Waterloo.

25 Years: CRDCN and Statistics Canada Supporting Research

There have been a number of milestones in the Canadian Research Data Centre Network's (CRDCN's) history, but there has not been a time where so many achievements converged in the same year. 2025 is looking to be one of these watershed periods in the history of the Network.

The year 2025 will mark the 25th anniversary of the founding of the CRDCN's partnership with Statistics Canada. This partnership has created a world-class network that supports researchers to produce insights from perspectives and methodologies across the social sciences and population health sciences. It has significantly widened researchers' access to Statistics Canada's confidential microdata, while maintaining the highest levels of privacy and data security. Before the CRDCN, researchers were required to travel to Statistics Canada in Ottawa to access the same microdata. The CRDCN and Statistics Canada partnered with Collaborating Institutions to construct 33 Research Data Centres (RDCs) on university campuses across Canada. Some RDCs then extended access to other universities without an RDC. By 2025, the Network will welcome a 46th member institution.

In 2025 we will also mark the transition of the Network from a primarily RDC-based network to a more robust virtual Research Data Centre (vRDC) Network which will also allow for remote access options. As the construction of the vRDC nears completion, the first Collaborating Institutions will join the vRDC, following the successful completion of a pilot at McMaster University.

2025 will also mark the start of the new CRDCN five-year Strategic Plan, led by our new Executive Di-

rector, Dr. Natalie Harrower. Developed in close collaboration with the CRDCN Board of Directors, Academic Council from our 33 RDCs, and input from a range of stakeholders in the wider research ecosystem, the new Strategic Plan is bold, yet flexible, allowing for the intersecting influences in the data ecosystem to both inform and uphold the values that our Network mem-

CRDCN 2025
Ottawa May 13 and 14

bers, governing members and staff hold dear.

2025 also marks the year the CRDCN will return to Ottawa for our annual conference to both celebrate

the research of the last 25 years and present work of the researchers that will help define the next 25 years. The CRDCN staff are working in close collaboration with Conference Co-Chair Claudia Sanmartin and her team at Statistics Canada, with the host University of Ottawa campus RDC's Academic Director, and Conference Co-Chair, Catherine McGoveran, and with the Scientific Committee, led by Chair and Academic Director of the Université de Sherbrooke, Simon Décary, to deliver CRDCN 2025, a conference that represents the breadth and depth of impactful and insightful research made possible through access to microdata.

Save the Date on May 13 and 14 to be in Ottawa, Ontario for this momentous occasion!

Lastly, 2025 marks 25 Years of CRDCN and Statistics Canada supporting research. Watch for more events and initiatives relating to these 25 years of critical partnership and collaboration, as we gear up to deliver the next 25 years together.

— Michèle Anderson, Director of Communications and Engagement, CRDCN

What you need to know

- 2025 will mark the 25th anniversary of CRDCN's partnership with Statistics Canada.
- Next year will also mark the integration of the virtual Research Data Centre Network.
- The CRDCN 2025 Conference will take place in Ottawa from May 13-14, 2025.

If you have any feedback or ideas for future articles or themes, please reach out to us at info@crdcn.ca.