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**WIIH Statement on Indigenous Identity**

Currently there is much discussion and distrust within, and around, Indigenous communities related to Indigenous identity. The purpose of this statement is to clarify a WIIH position on issues related to this topic in order to provide a tool to help ourselves and others navigate challenging times in a good way, using cultural and spiritual knowledges as shared by the WIIH Elders at monthly gatherings and specifically at the 2021 ON IMN & ON NEIRH/WIIH Fall Gathering on Lateral Kindness. This is not intended to make objective claims or directives about how identity is determined, derived, or controlled. The rationale for this statement is a need to reduce or eliminate on going and future fraudulent claims of Indigenous identity, and a need to create a culturally safe space for Indigenous academics, students, and community partners to continue to work together in kindness and with gratitude.

Indigenous identity is simple yet often becomes complex in colonial systems. At the WIIH we base our work in policy documents that support our self-determination, such as those published by the United Nations, “Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions,” (UNDRIP, Article 33, 1).[[1]](#footnote-1)1

To falsely claim Indigenous identity is an act of cultural appropriation and colonial violence.[[2]](#footnote-2)2

We operate from an evolving and living framework, based in cultural and spiritual teachings of many Original Peoples on Turtle Island, which holds that:

* Identity is self-determined by multiple factors, including and not limited to historical and contemporary genealogy, culture, and community participation and membership.
* Honesty and truth are at the core of the Indigenous ethic of relationality within Indigenous kinship.
* Honesty, truth, and transparency are at the core of ethical Indigenous academic conduct, research, and scholarship.

1. 1 UNDRIP (2008). <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/documents/DRIPS_en.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 2 **NAISA Council Statement on Indigenous Identity Fraud (2015).** <https://naisa.org/about/documents-archive/previous-council-statements/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)