



Understanding the First Nations Principles of OCAP: Our Road Map to Information Governance

First Nations people have always understood the value of community, the importance of respect, and the need to protect our resources for future generations. And today, one of our most important resources is information.

First Nations people have always been information gatherers. When we track and hunt or gather food from the land, we're engaging in information gathering that has a direct and important impact on our lives. First Nations people understand that information isn't just about numbers and surveys. It's about culture, identity, traditions, and self-determination.

That's why the First Nation Information Governance Centre was created. Since 1996, its mission has been to uphold the values of OCAP, a set of principles designed to protect First Nations' ownership and jurisdiction over their information and ensure that First Nations people are the stewards of their own information. OCAP ensures that First Nations people have ownership both individually and collectively as a community. It puts them in control so that they can decide how it is used, by whom, and under what conditions. It ensures that they have the right to determine and define access regardless of where it is held, and it defines possession, ensuring that they have the power to use their information for the benefit of their own communities. Possession is key to making ownership, access, and control possible. Taken together the First Nations principles of OCAP embody one important idea, that First Nations people understand their own needs and are in the best position to govern their own information.

The right of First Nations communities to own, control, access, and possess information about their peoples is fundamentally tied to self-determination and to the preservation and development of their culture.