



First Nations data sovereignty and self-determination

Without First Nations data sovereignty, place-based data risks perpetuating harm.

When working with First Nations communities, place-based data requires a fundamentally different approach:

First Nations data sovereignty principles apply:

- Communities have the right to control collection, ownership and application of their own data.
- CARE principles: Collective benefit, authority to control, responsibility, ethics.
- Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective Principles guide all work.
- AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research.

Connection to Country is fundamental data:

- Place means Country – cultural, spiritual and physical connection spanning deep time.
- Kinship, songlines, language and cultural knowledge are valid evidence.
- Community-defined indicators and success measures take precedence.

Historical context cannot be ignored:

- Colonial data practices have caused harm – data has been extracted and weaponised.
- Trust must be earned through genuine partnership, not assumed.
- Free, prior and informed consent required – relationship and time before project.

Governance and protocols are different:

- Traditional Owners, Elders and Land Councils have authority.
- Cultural protocols determine who can speak to what, when and how.
- Some knowledge is sacred or secret, and not for external sharing – this must be respected.