

### What is the Giiwe Model?

Giiwe is a model for improving coordination among Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations. The model was created with the goal of preventing Indigenous homelessness. Indeed, Giiwe is an Anishinaabemowin word that can be translated to “s/he goes home.” However, M'Wikwedong has successfully used the Giiwe Model to work in sectors such as Family Services, Community Safety, and Social Service Funding.

### Who is this model for?

M'Wikwedong shares this model with anyone interested in Indigenous leadership in inter-organization coordination. Indigenous organizations are welcome to adapt this model to their contexts and knowledge traditions. You may also rename the model as you see fit.

### What is the approach that guides the Giiwe Model?

Our model emphasizes that inter-organizational work will be more effective when there is trust. Giiwe builds trust by following Indigenous protocols, fostering awareness of Indigenous Knowledges, and creating time and space for people to know and understand each other. Sustaining adequate relationships among each other is a precondition for collaborative action.

### How does the Giiwe Model work?

Giiwe needs one or more Indigenous organizations in a leadership role. The main activity is hosting ongoing meetings called “Giiwe Circles” that last 2-3 hours each. The Giiwe Circles take place monthly, bi-monthly, or quarterly. Staff, Managers, and Directors of relevant organizations are invited to attend. Participants sit in a circle to do the following:



*The Giiwe Model*

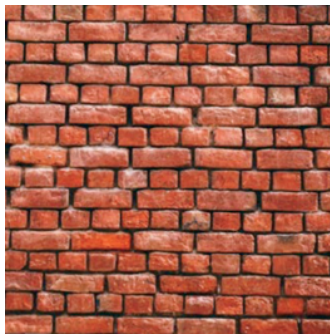
- **Ceremony.** Giiwe invites Indigenous Elders or Knowledge Keepers to facilitate the opening protocol. Such protocol often includes smudging, songs, or prayers.
- **Indigenous Knowledge Sharing.** Giiwe invites Indigenous People with traditional, experiential, or professional knowledge to share a teaching of relevance to your objectives. Our guests may take all time they need to share their teachings (even the whole session!).
- **Discussion and meal sharing.** Giiwe holds time for participants to share a meal and build relationships with each other. Additionally, Giiwe hosts a Sharing Circle for participants to hear each other. Sharing Circles are often facilitated by an Indigenous Elder or Knowledge Keeper. Participants speak one by one for as long as they wish. The Sharing Circle may be substituted for open discussion on a topic of shared interest.
- **Follow-up actions.** Between each Giiwe Circle, the Giiwe Coordinator plans for future Giiwe Circles, follows up on Giiwe-identified actions, and supports partner-led initiatives.

### What has Giiwe achieved?

- Indigenous leadership in inter-organizational collaboration. Giiwe was founded in 2018 and has sustained its leadership role in the Grey-Bruce region of Ontario, Canada.
- Significant community buy-in. Over 20 core organizations in the social service, health, environmental, and government sectors. Activities with 20-60 participants at a time.
- Improved coordination among organizations that can play a role in supporting Indigenous peoples facing homelessness or at risk of housing loss.
- Increased awareness about Indigenous knowledges, history, priorities, and collaboration methodologies. Speakers from Saugeen Ojibway Nation and other invited nations.

### How do Western and Indigenous views of reality impact inter-organizational work?

We use a metaphor of bricks and threads to explain possible differences between Western and Indigenous approaches to inter-organizational work. We acknowledge that both Western and Indigenous perspectives are internally diverse. We do not refer to a specific Indigenous knowledge system because the Giiwe Model engages Indigenous Peoples from different nations simultaneously. The metaphor we offer is not meant to describe reality but to stimulate our thinking about Giiwe compared to other inter-organizational collaborative approaches.



Western collaborative initiatives often emerge from “brick sensibilities.” Through this perspective, aspects of reality are divided into bricks that help people organize the world. Bricks can be organized according to their type and hierarchies. Relationships among organizations are structured around mandates. When facing an issue, brick sensibilities assume that knowing the bricks in the world will help humans engineer solutions. In turn, such solutions will create the desired social relationships. Brick sensibilities are objective-oriented and prefer fast solutions.

Giiwe is inspired by “thread sensibilities” that see relationships among things as more important than the things themselves. Threads are interwoven, which calls for holistic approaches that consider all threads. Humans are just one being of Creation that relies on all other beings to sustain their lives. Relationships among organizations are valued because we need each other to foster collective well-being. When facing an issue, knowledge can have practical and metaphorical uses. Slow-paced approaches that focus on relationships are preferred. Only relationship-building can create the collective capacities needed to imagine shared actions and solutions.



### For more information about Giiwe

- Contact Diane Giroux, Giiwe Coordinator [giiwe.home@gmail.com](mailto:giiwe.home@gmail.com)
- Read our paper “Giiwe. An Indigenous-led Model for Homelessness Prevention”

**Credit for Bricks and threads metaphor and images:** Jimmy, E., Andreotti, V., & Stein, S. (2019). *Towards Braiding*. Musagetes. Shared through a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license.