AI Bytes

Making Sense of Artificial Intelligence in Get SET (Skills, Education and Training)



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Get SET
Skills, Education and Training

Welcome to *AI Bytes*, your curated guide to AI in Get SET! Making sense of AI.

The looms arrived with a promise…. They would make cloth faster, cheaper and more plentiful. Factory owners called it progress, but in the textile towns of early 19th-century England, skilled weavers saw another future taking shape. They saw workmanship sacrificed for speed, livelihoods made precarious and decisions about their communities handed to distant owners.

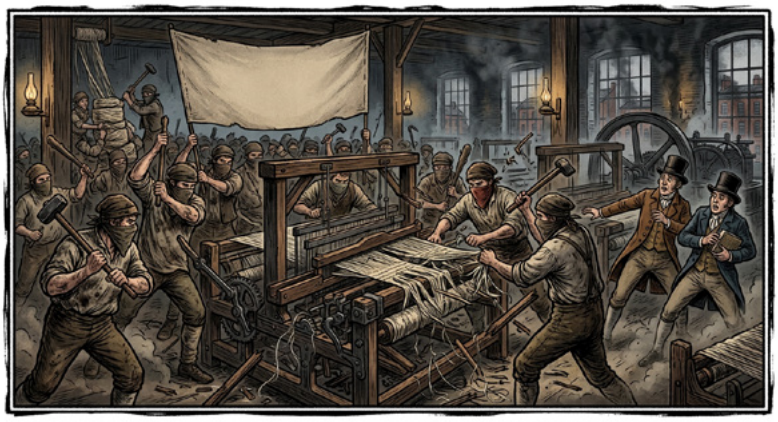
So, some pushed back.

Under cover of night, workers smashed automated looms — machines that had come to symbolize not progress itself but progress without responsibility. History gave them a name: **Luddites**. Over time, that name became shorthand for anyone supposedly afraid of technology.

However, the Luddites weren't fighting the tool. They were fighting **who owned it, whose interests it served and who was expected to bear the consequences.**

Fast-forward to the modern classroom. As AI tools enter education at remarkable speed, we find ourselves confronting similar crossroads.

As algorithms influence how learners research, write, think and communicate, we have a responsibility to ask what kind of technological culture we are creating. That includes questions of agency, foundational learning, accessibility,



privacy and data sovereignty. Who gets to decide when a community's language, culture, knowledge or creative expression becomes training data, and who benefits once it does?

In this issue:

- AI, power and whose interests it serves
- Whose Data, Whose Story? Indigenous data sovereignty in the age of AI

AI, power and whose interests it serves

Thinking like a smart consumer about artificial intelligence

We already instill this kind of awareness in learners. A new app appears, a subscription promises "no cost," an ad follows them around. We teach them to ask: *Who made this, and what does this company want from me?* As the ToS;DR project points out, clicking "I agree" can be a

Meet the *AI Bytes* team



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Michael Andrews is an experienced executive director and a recognized leader in adult education, community and workforce development across the nonprofit, public, and private sectors in Ontario and British Columbia. With over two decades of leading organizations and programs, he brings deep expertise in program development, partnership-building, and evidence-based service delivery. An early adopter of generative AI, Michael has spent over three years working with frontier large language models. He develops custom AI solutions for curriculum design, organizational research and operational efficiency, and advises nonprofit and education-sector leaders on the practical, responsible integration of these technologies.

* This bulletin is edited by Contact North | Contact Nord. Generative AI tools supported aspects of ideation, formatting and image creation in this work. Original ideas, translation, knowledge, research and connections were developed by the authors. This disclosure reflects our commitment to transparency, intellectual integrity and responsible use of emerging technologies.

reflex, not an informed decision, even for people who work with data every day. That's why AI tools deserve the same questions to understand its incentives and impacts.

This issue of *AI Bytes* applies that smart-consumer thinking to artificial intelligence. We look at who builds AI, what they gain from it, what it asks of you in return and whether it was built with communities like yours in mind. These questions matter whether you are a learner trying a new study tool or a practitioner choosing AI for your program.

Governments are already asking these questions at a global level. In July 2024, the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), a group of 46 countries and the European Union joined forces with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to push for AI that is safe, human-centred and trustworthy.[1] Their shared foundation is the OECD AI Principles, first adopted in 2019 and updated in 2024.[2]

This bulletin brings that same thinking down to a practical, everyday level for Ontario's Get SET, literacy and post-secondary communities.

1. Who builds AI, and what do they want?

Every AI tool is built by someone, and that someone has goals. Understanding those goals is the first step to using AI responsibly.

Most of the AI tools people use every day are owned and operated by private technology companies. Their design choices are shaped by a desire to:

- Grow their user base and market share
- Stay ahead of competitors
- Collect data to improve their products
- Meet expectations from investors

A small number of companies also control much of the computing power, funding and infrastructure that AI depends on. A June 2025 landscape report from the AI Now Institute, a U.S. research institute that studies the social impact of AI, found that this concentration of power shapes how AI systems behave and whose interests they ultimately serve.[3]

Public, academic and nonprofit developers build some AI tools too. Their work is often driven by the quest to:

- Advance research
- Serve the public interest
- Improve learning outcomes
- Test new ideas

But these organizations often rely on the same funding, data and infrastructure as private companies, so many of the same questions still apply. Their decisions are often shaped by the push to:

- Improve retention or completion rates
- Demonstrate measurable learning outcomes
- Expand to more campuses and programs
- Integrate analytics into institutional decisions

Questions worth considering before adopting a tool:

Who created this tool?

Why was this tool designed in the first place and for whose benefit?

Does it fit what my learners or program actually need or what the company needs?

2. Why "free" AI tools still cost something

Many AI tools that learners and educators use, such as study helpers, writing assistants and chatbots, arrive with a "free" sticker on the box. But "free" is an incentive structure, not a gift. Someone benefits from that label. "Free" usually means the cost isn't paid in dollars. It's paid in data, attention or growing dependence on the tool.

Apply the same question we'd ask about any "free" digital tool: If I'm not paying, what revenue model is keeping this company afloat.

Mozilla Foundation researchers who have reviewed dozens of AI products for privacy have repeatedly found that many companies are vague about whether your conversations are used to train future AI models, and rarely give users a clear way to opt out.[4]

A free tool is also often a doorway into a bigger business plan that could be encouraging users to upgrade to a paid tier, building brand loyalty, integrating you into a suite of products or growing market share.

Because free tools are built to maximize use, their design can shape habits such as encouraging frequent use, prioritizing speed over depth or nudging convenience over genuine learning.

Questions worth asking in the classroom:

- If it's free, how does the company make money?
- What data does it collect, and why?
- Does it encourage learning, or dependence?

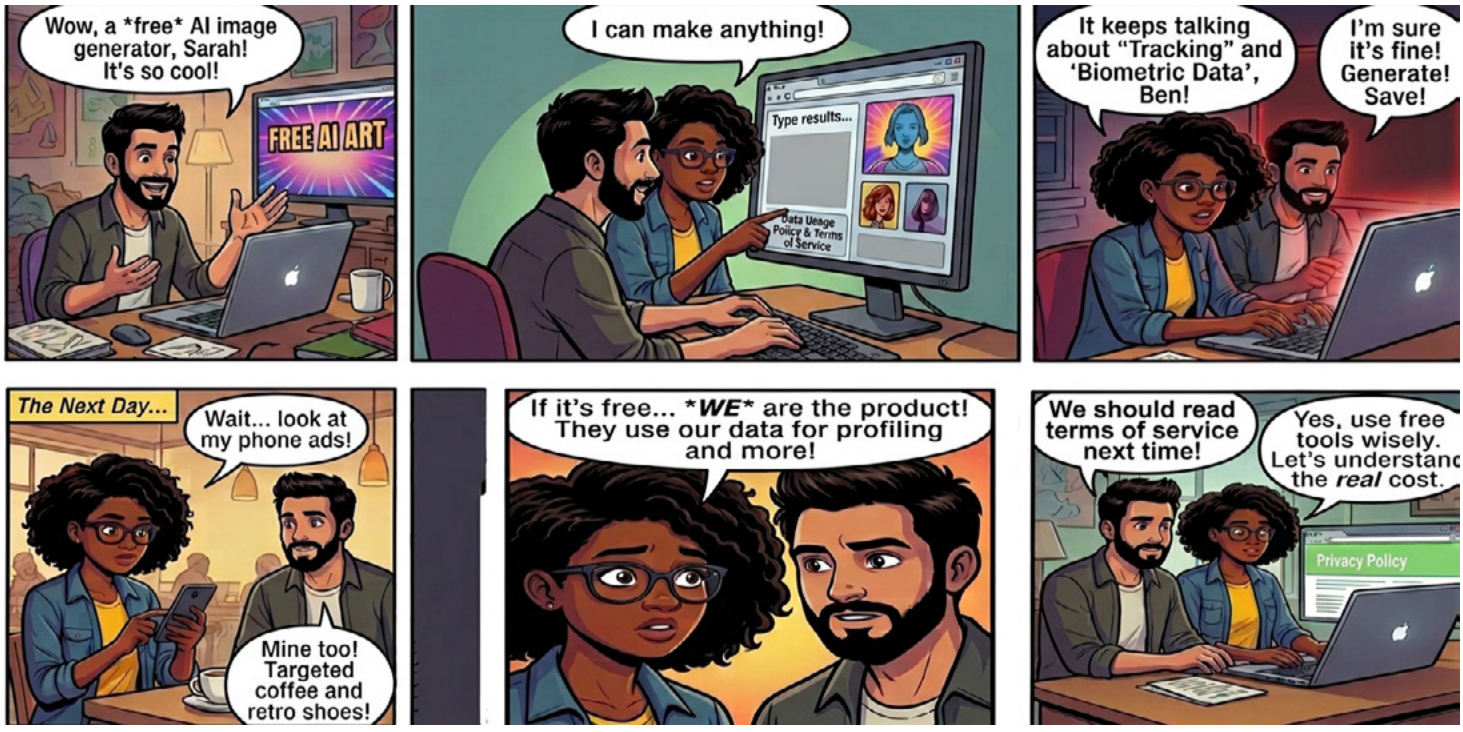
3. Data privacy in plain language: What am I giving away?

"Privacy policy" and "terms of service" are both the Internet's most skipped documents and the ones that matter most when AI is involved. Using an AI tool can mean handing over everything typed, the files uploaded, patterns of when and how long the tool is used, and in some cases even biometric or location data.



AI tools can collect:

- **Text typed** (inputs, prompts, queries)
- **Files uploaded** (documents, images, assignments)



- **Usage patterns** (frequency, duration, timestamps)
- **Metadata** (device type, browser, IP)
- **Biometric or location data** *in some cases*
    - e.g., voice tools, facial recognition systems, mobile apps with location permissions

In Ontario, public colleges and universities are legally required to protect personal information under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA). As of July 1, 2025, a new provincial law — Bill 194, the Strengthening Cyber Security and Building Trust in the Public Sector Act — bolstered this further. Public institutions, including colleges and universities, must now complete a written privacy impact assessment before collecting personal information through new tools, including AI.[5]

A documented example:

In February 2024, Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner (IPC) investigated a university's use of AI-powered exam-monitoring software. The investigation found the software collected sensitive biometric information and made automated judgments about students' behaviour, and recommended the university give clearer notice about what was being collected and why.[6]

One important distinction:

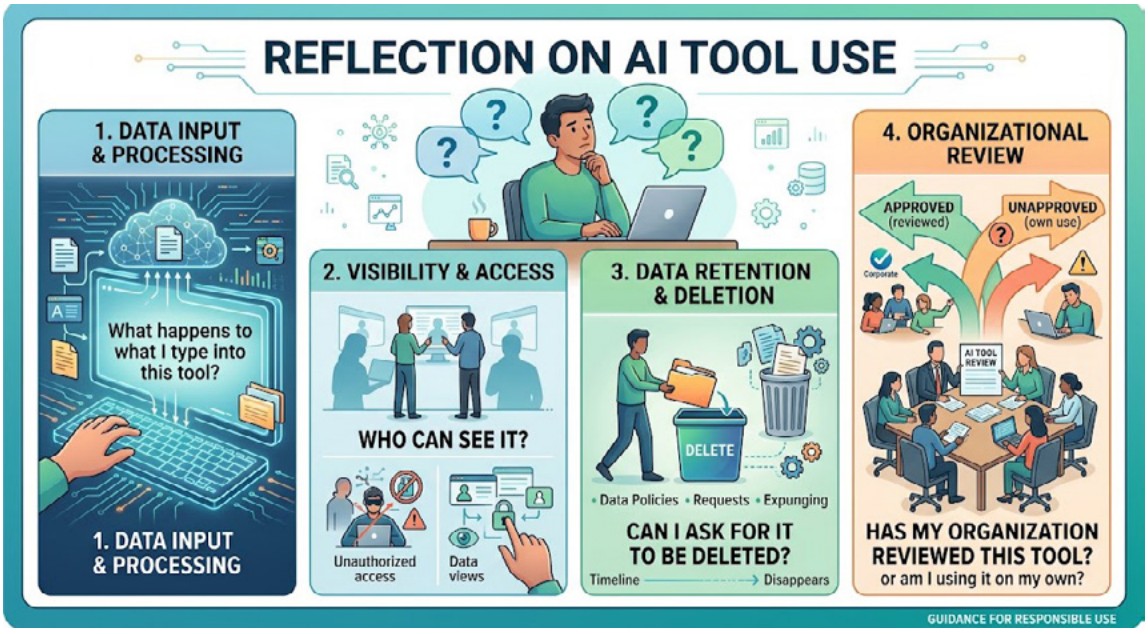
FIPPA and Bill 194 apply to Ontario's public institutions. They don't automatically apply to every AI tool a learner or practitioner picks up on their own, which means a free chatbot app downloaded independently isn't bound by the same rules. This is why smart-consumer thinking matters: **The legal safety net is thinner outside your organization's approved tools.**

What you need to know:

- **FIPPA and Bill 194 regulate public institutions**, not private apps.
- **Institution approved tools fall under institutional policy**, procurement rules, privacy reviews and oversight. **Individually downloaded AI tools do not.**
- A "free" app used outside the institution's ecosystem is governed only by its own **terms of service, privacy policy** and the general consumer protection laws that apply to everyone, which are less robust as public sector privacy legislation.
- Policy protects people only where policy applies.

Reflection:

- *What happens to what I type into this tool?*
- *Who can see it, and can I ask for it to be deleted?*
- *Has my organization reviewed this tool, or am I using it on my own?*



4. Corporate AI in education: Questions practitioners and learners should ask

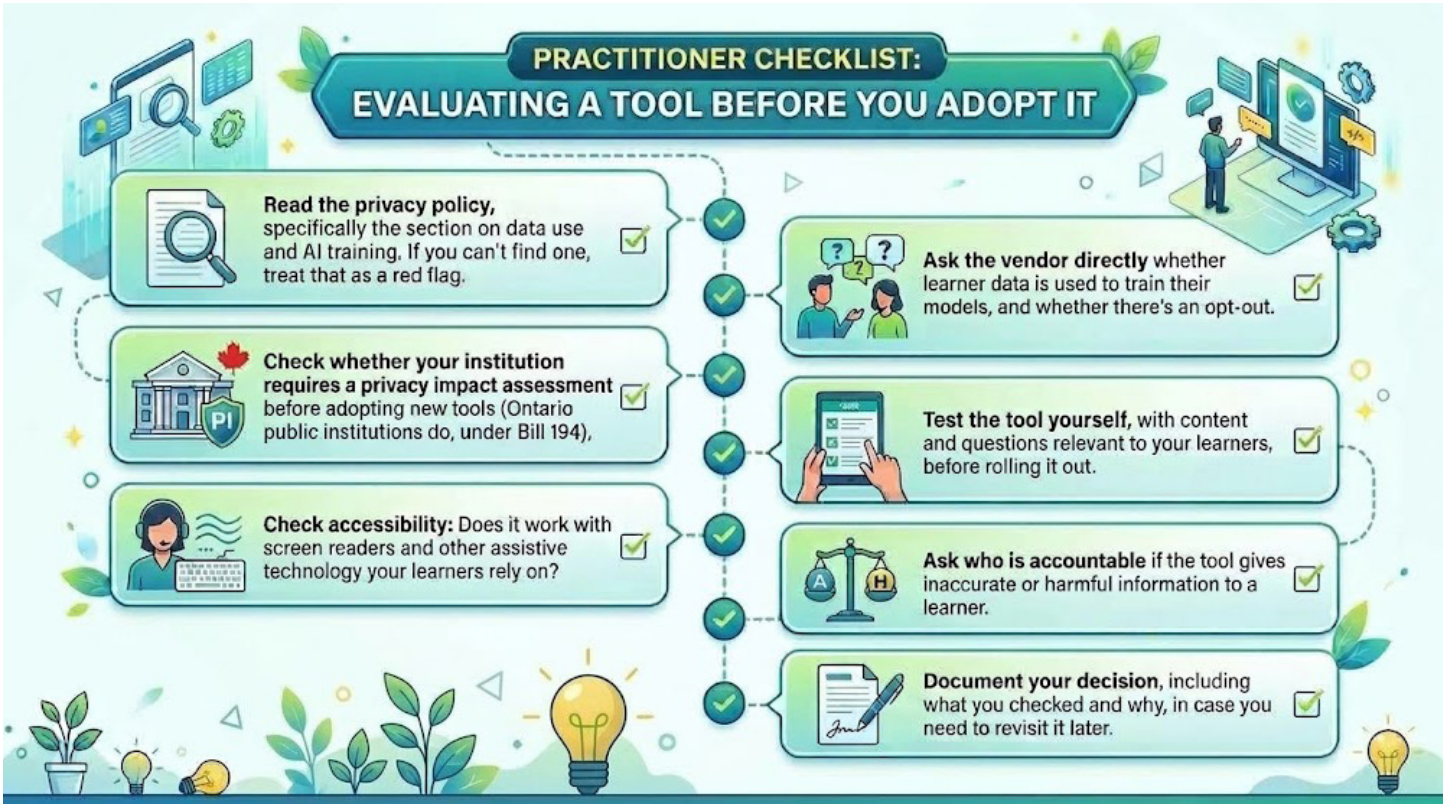
Canada's federal Privacy Commissioner and Ontario's IPC have both published guidance on generative AI that points to the same core questions, whether you're a learner deciding whether to trust a tool or a practitioner deciding whether to bring one into a classroom.[7]

- ✓ *What data does this tool collect, and is that collection necessary for what it does?*
- ✓ *Was the data used to train this tool collected legally and with consent?*
- ✓ *Is there a human checking the AI's output before it's used to make a decision about a learner?*
- ✓ *Can learners opt out of having their information used to train future versions of the tool?*
- ✓ *What happens to the data if the company is sold or shuts down?*
- ✓ *Does the vendor's privacy policy actually answer these questions, or is it vague?*

These are close to the same gaps Ontario's IPC identified in its 2024 review of AI use on a Canadian campus regarding unclear notice and limited transparency about how the AI was handling student information.[6]

5. Practitioner checklist: Evaluating a tool before you adopt it

A practical checklist to work through before bringing a new AI tool into your program:



For a deeper dive, Ontario's Higher Education Quality Council (HEQCO) is currently running a multi-institution study on responsible generative AI adoption across Ontario universities, a useful resource for practitioners building their own policies.[8]

6. Was this tool trained on data from communities like ours?

This is an equity question, not a technical one. You don't need to understand how a model was built to ask it.

AI tools learn from huge collections of existing text, images and other data. If certain languages, cultures, genders or lived experiences are underrepresented in that data, the tool's answers can be less accurate, less useful or even reflect stereotypes for the people it underrepresents.

In 2021, UNESCO adopted the first global standard on AI ethics, agreed to by 194 member countries, which specifically names bias from underrepresented training data as a core risk to address.[9]

In 2024, UNESCO researchers tested several widely used generative AI tools and found consistent gender bias along with cultural and ethnic stereotyping. In one test, the tools were far more likely to describe women in domestic roles and men in professional ones. In another, AI generated stories about a British man included varied careers like doctor or teacher, while stories about a Zulu woman assigned her a domestic worker role roughly one time in five. The researchers traced much of this behaviour to gaps and imbalances in the training data.[10]

For Ontario's diverse Get SET, including francophone learners, Indigenous learners, newcomers, and learners with disabilities, this matters deeply. A tool that hasn't been tested with these communities in mind may not serve them as well as it serves everyone else.

Reflection:

- *Has this AI tool been tested with learners from the groups I serve?*
- *Does it support the languages and contexts my learners need?*
- *If I try it with content specific to my community, does it perform as well as the polished examples in the AI company's marketing?*

None of this means AI tools are off-limits. It means using the same critical habits you'd use for any product asking for your trust and your data:

- ✓ Know who built it
- ✓ Know what they want
- ✓ Know whether it was built with people like you in mind

7. What happens when we upload a document to an AI tool?

The power of an AI system is built not only from the questions people type. It is also shaped by the documents, images, lesson plans, articles and fragments of knowledge they invite it to work with.

Consider a familiar situation: Someone uploads a textbook excerpt, worksheet, report or article, then asks an AI tool to simplify the language, create questions, summarize key ideas or generate new activities. The request may take only seconds. Yet the document has now travelled beyond the user's device and into a system whose data practices, privacy settings and business model may not be immediately visible.

Uploading a document to an AI tool can feel as routine as attaching a file to an email. But a large language model, or LLM, processes that material in a particular way.

First, the system converts text into smaller units called tokens. As explored in Edition 12 of *AI Bytes*, a token might be a whole word, part of a word, punctuation or a short sequence of characters. The model uses those tokens to identify patterns and relationships in language, allowing it to generate a response that fits both the prompt and the material provided.

If someone uploads a worksheet and asks for a simpler version, the AI is not reading or understanding the worksheet as a person would. It is processing patterns in the text, responding to the instructions it receives and producing likely language based on its training.

What happens to an uploaded document afterward?

It depends on the tool. Some services retain prompts and files for a period of time. Some may use content for safety checks or service improvement. Others provide settings that limit whether conversations are used to improve models. Workplace, school, enterprise, education and API accounts may also offer different protections than a free consumer account. The key is to review the terms of service and settings for the particular tool being used.

Use caution with purchased lesson plans, subscription resources, publisher-owned textbooks, and materials containing third-party text, images, worksheets, or other copyrighted content. Purchasing or accessing these materials usually grants permission to use them, not to redistribute them or upload them to another service.[11]

When permission is unclear, here are good practices:

- Describe the learning goal and ask AI to generate an original activity from that description.
- Provide a brief, original summary instead of uploading the full text.
- Use self-created, public-domain, or openly licensed materials, following any applicable license terms.
- Consider sharing a public link rather than uploading a copied file. Check the source's terms and how the AI tool handles linked pages.
- Seek permission from the creator, publisher or rights holder before uploading or sharing the material.
- Make notes of the prompt you used and from where you downloaded the content[12]

As a rule of thumb, do not upload copyright protected material to an external AI service unless you own it, have permission, or have confirmed Fair Dealing.[12]

The purpose is not to avoid AI-supported work. AI can support planning, accessibility, analysis and adaptation. The opportunity is to understand the pathway a resource takes once it leaves a device and to make informed choices about privacy, intellectual property and responsible digital participation.

Learn more about copyright and AI

- Copyright + Fair Dealing Essentials — Dalhousie University

  A practical overview of copyright, public domain, ownership, educational exceptions, and fair dealing in Canada.
- Generative Artificial Intelligence — University of Waterloo

  Guidance on copyright considerations when using generative AI for teaching and learning, including a recommendation to avoid uploading material you do not own without permission.

Did you know?

Existing Canadian copyright jurisprudence suggests that authorship must be attributed to a human who exercises skill and judgment in creating a work. Canada's copyright law therefore remains grounded in human authorship and creative contribution.

The use of AI-generated and AI-assisted content remains a developing area of law, so educators and creators should rely on current guidance as copyright policy and court decisions evolve. Visit

Field Law's Bespectacled Cats: An Update on AI + Copyright for a quick legal snapshot of how Canada is handling AI and authorship.

Whose Data, Whose Story? Indigenous data sovereignty in the age of AI

When Wab Kinew and his father co-taught an Anishinaabemowin class at the University of Manitoba, they built an app together to help their students learn the language.[13] Years before becoming Premier of Manitoba, Kinew demonstrated what technology can do when a community decides how to share its knowledge. Generative AI now raises that same question on a much larger scale. Who decides how Indigenous knowledge is used? And who benefits?

In this section:

- How AI training can become a new form of colonization
- What Indigenous data sovereignty and the OCAP® principles mean
- How AI can support Indigenous languages and knowledge
- A learning activity to try

The digital divide, defined as unequal access to reliable Internet, is well documented.[14] It became especially clear when Get SET and other services moved online during COVID-19.

Generative AI adds a new layer to this divide. Now the question includes who holds power over the data that trains AI models. For Indigenous peoples, that power is uneven. It affects how AI models are trained, who controls Indigenous data and how cultural knowledge is used.

For decades, Indigenous peoples have shared their stories, histories, images, languages and culture in books, films, websites and other media. Much of that "data" has now been used to train AI models but not equally. AI outputs can show bias based on gender, race and disability. The same is true for Indigenous peoples, and these biases can be stronger where identities overlap.

How AI training can reproduce or extend colonial patterns

Many widely used generative AI systems have been developed by large technology companies based primarily in North America and Europe. Their training data may include large collections of books, websites and other media depending on the system and its sources. That includes Indigenous cultural knowledge and histories. It also includes many accounts of Indigenous peoples written by non-Indigenous authors. As a result, AI may learn about Indigenous peoples mostly from outsiders' voices. Think of training data as a library: If most of the books about a community were written by outsiders, that is the story AI learns. When Indigenous voices are missing from training data, AI can inadvertently lean toward a Western perspective and miss broader cultural nuances. Tu[15] warns that this risks creating "digital versions of extractive colonialism" that further marginalize Indigenous languages and cultures.

Where Indigenous materials are collected or used without consent, consultation or community control, AI development can conflict with Indigenous data-sovereignty principles. Indigenous "data" can include languages, traditions, images and recorded oral histories. At the same time, important information may be left out of training data. When that happens, some peoples are misrepresented or missing altogether, which adds to bias and reinforces stereotypes.[16, 17]

Indigenous data sovereignty and OCAP® principles

Indigenous peoples were building pathways to data sovereignty long before ChatGPT arrived. First Nations established the OCAP® principles in 1998 as a pioneering framework for Indigenous data governance. Today, the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) stewards the principles.[15, 18] OCAP® stands for:

- **Ownership**: A community owns its information collectively, the same way a person owns their personal information
- **Control**: First Nations can control all research and information management that affects them
- **Access**: First Nations can access information about themselves and their communities, wherever it is held
- **Possession**: Physical control of the data, which protects ownership

OCAP® is a First Nations framework. Inuit and Métis have their own approaches to data governance, so it is worth asking which principles apply in each community.

Learn more: Understanding the First Nations Principles of OCAP®.[19]

Indigenous data is more than numbers. It can include personal information, community-level data and cultural information, such as images of sacred objects or art and recordings of First Nations teachings. First Nations data sovereignty "refers to the need for each individual First Nation to exercise control over the collection, management and use of data concerning their community, peoples, land and resources, in accordance with their worldview".[17] Many First Nations advocates and organizations have called for decisions about Indigenous data and AI to be made on their own terms, with permission, real consultation and final authority resting with First Nations.[17]

How AI can support Indigenous languages and knowledge

Some Indigenous materials may have been included in training data without applying Indigenous data-governance principles. Still, the same technology can help Indigenous cultures and knowledge grow stronger. One key example is language revitalization: using AI to "help to teach more First Nations people to speak their languages".[17] The First Languages AI Reality project, led by Indigenous technologists, is building speech recognition tools for endangered Indigenous languages.[20]

Kinew's app, mentioned at the start of this article, is an early example of this kind of community-led work.

Another approach, called Two-Eyed AI, combines Indigenous knowledge with Western science. It builds on Two-Eyed Seeing, a principle championed by Mi'kmaw Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall. In Canada, AI is helping to preserve languages such as Mohawk, Algonquin and Michif through speech- and text-based tools.[21]

Try this with your learners

Use a chatbot to generate a short, general explanation of a topic. Do not enter personal, confidential, sacred or community-held information. Compare the response with sources created by the relevant Indigenous community or organization. Identify what the chatbot gets right, what requires verification, whose perspectives are missing and whether the chatbot makes claims beyond its authority. Here's a prompt example:

> Give a brief overview of the Anishinaabe peoples of Northwestern Ontario. Identify where your information may be incomplete or generalized. Do not present this response as an authoritative account and suggest types of community-created sources that should be consulted.

Practitioners should adapt examples as appropriate. First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities have distinct histories, languages, governance structures and approaches to knowledge. Whenever possible, use resources created or approved by the specific community being discussed.



The Luddites taught us that when a new tool enters a society, the most important question isn't "What can this machine do?" It is **"Who owns this machine, and who pays the price for its use?"** Whether we are preserving endangered languages or drafting everyday workflows, our goal must not be passive adoption. We must ensure that AI serves human agency, respects cultural sovereignty and remains a tool guided by human wisdom. In the next issue, we will explore AI mirrors — a look at how AI reproduces tone, language and voice without ever grasping the meaning behind them, from vibe coding to translation to voice cloning.

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