NAJA Media Guide for Reporting on First Nations

No two First Nations in Canada are the same and reporting on them effectively requires understanding their respective governments, people, history, art, and environment. The NAJA media guide for reporting on First Nations helps journalists learn about the complexities of First Nations and their varied communities.

GOVERNMENT
1. How is the community governed (is it by council, chief or both, hereditary system or Indian Act system)?
2. How is the governing body structured? How are laws created and enacted?
3. What governmental services outside of administration are provided (police, firefighters, EMS, healthcare facilities, housing, schools, etc.)?
4. Who is eligible to vote? Are there any geographic restrictions (can voters get mail-in ballots)?

PEOPLE
1. How many citizens are there?
2. How is citizenship determined?
3. What are the demographics of the area (ethnicity, religion, language, economic status, etc.)?
4. How many citizens live within the community vs. outside of the community?
5. Was there a federal Indian residential school on or near the community?

ECONOMY
1. What are the community’s major industries or sources of revenue?
2. What is the annual economic impact (for instance, a Southern Chiefs’ Organization, Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak and Brandon University report showed that Indigenous people contributed $2.3 billion to Manitoba’s GDP in 2016)?
3. Who are major job providers in the region?

GEOGRAPHY
1. Is the community still located on its traditional territory? If not, how/when were people relocated?
2. Where is the traditional territory located, and what major cities or physical attractions are there?
3. What natural resources does the community have access to?

CULTURE
1. Is there a news or radio outlet that serves the community?
2. What holidays does the community celebrate; is there an annual feast?
3. Who are notable citizens, both living and deceased?
4. How do citizens refer to themselves (some Ojibway prefer to be called Anishinaabe, some Cree prefer Nêhiyawak, for example)?
5. How does the community refer to itself (for instance: Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation, Opaskwayak Cree Nation)?

TREATIES
1. Has a treaty been signed with the federal government or the crown?
2. What are the terms of the treaty?
3. Are the terms being honored?
4. How does the treaty continue to impact people?