

Terms of Reference: GBIF Task Group on Indigenous Data Governance

June 2025

Context

GBIF—the Global Biodiversity Information Facility—is an international network and data infrastructure funded by governments, dedicated to providing open access to biodiversity data. The network includes more than 2,000 data-publishing institutions located in nearly 150 countries, each committed to making biodiversity data FAIR and open. The easy access to and wide use of this data contributes to GBIF’s vision of “a world in which the best possible biodiversity data underpins research, policy and decisions.”

Members of the GBIF community have followed with interest the development of the CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance, and the Science Committee has now established a voluntary task group to provide input and recommendations toward implementing them across the GBIF network and infrastructure. Recognizing that this will be a long-term effort, the task group will initially form for a one-year period, aiming to deliver guidance materials and first recommendations, after which next steps will be discussed.

Suggested background reading

- O'Brien et al. (2024) [Earth Science Data Repositories: Implementing the CARE Principles](#)
- Jennings et al. (2023) [Applying the CARE Principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty to ecology and biodiversity data](#)
- Jennings et al. (2025) [Governance of Indigenous data in open earth systems science](#)
- Hutchins et al. (2023) [Arthropods are kin: Operationalizing Indigenous data sovereignty to respectfully utilize genomic data from Indigenous lands](#)
- Russo Carroll et al. (2021) [Operationalizing the CARE and FAIR Principles for Indigenous data futures](#)
- Robertson T et al. (2014) [The GBIF Integrated Publishing Toolkit: Facilitating the Efficient Publishing of Biodiversity Data on the Internet](#)
- Wilkinson et al. (2016) [The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship](#)
- GBIF.org news on CODATA *Twenty-year Review* (2020) [Twenty years of GBIF: Independent review charts successes and challenges](#)
- GBIF.org news on systematic review of GBIF-enabled research (2021) [Data integration enables global biodiversity synthesis](#)
- GBIF.org news on economic valuation of GBIF network, infrastructure and services (2023) [Report reveals return on investments in GBIF](#)

Mandate for the task group

1. **Refine work plans:** Develop and adjust iterative, time-bound work plans for the task group
2. **Assess current practices:** Conduct a baseline assessment of data and practices in the GBIF network that relate to Indigenous Peoples and local communities

3. **Gather input:** Engage with the GBIF community and other experts to identify best practices around data sharing and access
4. **Recommendations on CARE:** Advise on how GBIF could enact the CARE Principles as compatible norms for data from the GBIF network
5. **Support technical pilots:** Provide feedback on activities piloting technical implementation relevant to Indigenous-related topics within the GBIF infrastructure
6. **Communicate findings:** Share foundational materials on Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance with GBIF nodes and the wider biodiversity informatics community
7. **Propose future plans:** Suggest next steps and directions for the task group's work

Timeline

The task group will operate for an initial period of one year, starting from May 2025.

The group will meet online every four to six weeks and conduct a final review to assess the continued need for the task group, confirm member commitment, identify additional participants, and evaluate the structure of the group.

Mode of operation

The group will be led by the Chair and coordinated by the GBIF Secretariat. The group will mostly operate remotely through email and virtual meetings, with associated collaborative tools, such as Google Docs. An in-person meeting is planned for the Living Data conference, Bogota, Colombia, October 2025. Hybrid options will be provided if members are unable to travel.

In addition to any research publications, final output document(s) will be made available through [GBIF's documentation process](#) that includes community peer review and possible volunteer translation.

Leveraging community interest in the task group

Members from across the GBIF network have already signalled a keen interest in this work. To help the task group channel and benefit from this enthusiasm, the GBIF Secretariat will establish mechanism(s) for engaging and communicating with those individuals who are interested in tracking, responding to and participating in the work initiated by the task group. These individuals may be invited to comment on draft outputs, participate in consultations, join online discussions as the work of the task group progresses, and receive notification of its outputs and events of interest.

Task group membership

Members have been invited to join for an initial one-year period and represent experts across issues relating to Indigenous data governance and biodiversity. The invitation process has been overseen by the Chair, with support from the GBIF Secretariat, aiming to include a good geographical representation, gender balance, and range in specific areas of expertise.

- Dr. [Lydia Jennings](#) (chair)
Pascua Yaqui Tribe (United States)
Assistant Professor in Environmental Science, [Dartmouth College](#)
Lydia is an environmental soil microbiologist whose work focuses on the intersection of soil health, Indigenous data sovereignty and environmental policy. She has been

involved in various initiatives that aim to protect ecosystems while fostering collaboration between Indigenous communities and the scientific community.

- **[Wayne Florence](#)**
Research and Exhibitions Director, [Iziko Museums of South Africa](#)
Wayne is a marine biologist and Director of Research and Exhibitions. He leads a multidisciplinary team working at the intersection of traditional science and increasing the representation of Indigenous knowledge. His efforts focus on integrating diverse perspectives into museum research, exhibitions, and curatorial practices, enriching public understanding.
- **Alberto França**
Terena (Brazil)
Executive Coordinator, [Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil](#) (APIB)
Alberto is an Indigenous leader of the Terena people, widely recognized for his advocacy for the rights of Indigenous peoples in Brazil, and serves as an executive coordinator of the Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil (APIB), one of the country's leading Indigenous representative organizations. Alberto has represented the Indigenous movement in key national governance spaces, such as the Genetic Heritage Management Council (CGen), responsible for regulating access to genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge. He is also a member of the National Biodiversity Commission (CONABIO), where he contributes to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Brazil, particularly in shaping and executing policies for biodiversity conservation. In addition to his political engagement, Alberto plays a significant role in promoting and disseminating Indigenous science. His contributions include publications on the proposals of Indigenous Peoples and local communities in Brazil regarding Digital Sequence Information (DSI), as well as reports highlighting the richness and interconnections of traditional knowledge systems across the country.
- *Alternates*
 - **Mabel Fernandes** (alternate)
Apurinã (Brazil)
Coordinator, [Federação das Organizações e Comunidades Indígenas do Médio Purus](#) (FOCIMP) | Executive Secretary, União das Mulheres Indígenas da Amazônia Brasileira (UMIAB)
Mabel is from Terra Sagrada Village in the Caititu Indigenous Land and manages finances for her grassroots organization. An advocate for environmental rights, women's rights, and youth empowerment, she supports JUVA – Juventude Unida pela Vida na Amazônia. In 2024, she participated as an indigenous delegate in updating Brazil's NBSAP, contributing to the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in biodiversity conservation. Mabel also serves as an alternate representative on CONABIO – Conselho Nacional da Biodiversidade.
 - **Lais Brasileiro** (Brazil)
Technical Advisor, [Articulation of Indigenous Peoples of Brazil](#) (APIB)
Lais holds a PhD in Ecology from University of Brasília (UnB) and, for the past two years, has been supporting APIB's biodiversity strategy, assisting Indigenous participation in all biodiversity-related agendas, including key milestones such as the updating process of Brazil's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP) and COP 16 in Cali.
- **[Nico Franz](#)**
Krishtalka Director and Professor, [Biodiversity Institute and Natural History Museum](#) | Professor, [Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Kansas](#) (United States)
Nico is an evolutionary biologist and insect systematist specializing in weevils. His

research program also focuses on developing innovative biocollections infrastructure and biodiversity data science services. He is an academic leader of the [Symbiota](#) software project.

- **Máret J Hætta**

Sámi (Norway)

Project Manager, Arctic and Environmental Unit, [The Saami Council](#) | University College Lecturer, [Sámi University of Applied Sciences](#)

Máret works for the Saami Council as a project leader on issues of Indigenous data sovereignty, climate adaptation, and governance in the Arctic. With a background in community-based research and Saami knowledge, she has lead projects that centers Indigenous priorities in Arctic observing systems.

- *Alternates*

- **[Per Axelsson](#)**

Associate Professor, [Department of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies, Umeå University](#) (Sweden)

Axelsson is an associate professor of history and has published on Indigenous and Sámi related research the last two decades, especially within health and history.

- **[Susanna Ragnhild Andersdatter Siri](#)**

Sami (Norway)

Researcher, Centre for Sami Health Research (SSHf), [Department of Community Medicine, UiT: The Arctic University of Norway](#)

Susanna is a northern Sami-speaking woman from Guovdageaidnu, grown up in a traditional reindeer herding family. She works within epidemiology focusing on the Sami people and risk of cardiovascular diseases. She is the co-founder of the GIDA-Sapmi network that promotes the CARE Principles and Sami data sovereignty.

- **[Maui Hudson](#)**

Whakatōhea Nation (New Zealand)

Associate Professor and Director, [Te Kotahi Research Institute, University of Waikato](#)

Maui's research is focused on the intersection of traditional knowledge and science, Indigenous data sovereignty, deep knowledge co-production, and benefit sharing. He is also a Council member and strategic advisor for Local Contexts.

- **[Leslie "Leke" Hutchins](#)**

Kānaka 'Ōiwi (United States)

Postdoctoral Fellow, Arizona State University

Leke's research is focused on applying Indigenous Data Sovereignty frameworks to the community and molecular ecology questions he investigates, of which understanding how agroforestry systems can be a tool to bolster insect biodiversity and support food sovereignty is particularly important.

- **[Cassandra Sedran-Price](#)**

Muruwari/Gangugari (Australia)

Senior Research Fellow, [University Centre for Rural Health, Northern Rivers, University of Sydney](#) | Research Affiliate, [CSIRO](#)

Cas is an interdisciplinary researcher working across climate ecology, natural resource management and Indigenous health. She co-chairs the Indigenous Steering Committee for the HEAL (Healthy Environments And Lives) Network. Her research focuses on operationalising Indigenous Data Sovereignty within organisations and advancing environmental and health equity through Indigenous-led data practices.

GBIF Secretariat support

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