

Responsible Research Partnerships with Indigenous Communities

Moving Beyond Past Research Injustices

The primary audience for this information is Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers working with tribal communities, academic institutions, research organizations, and agencies. In the past, research in and on Indigenous communities was often exploitive, unethical and even abusive. This Fact Sheet provides an overview of the ways in which we can collectively move forward towards ethical and equitable research partnerships between Western scientists and Indigenous communities.

What is Traditional Knowledge?

“From an Indigenous perspective, Traditional Knowledge (TK) encompasses all that is known about the world around us and how we apply that knowledge in relation to those beings, physical and otherwise, that share our world. From this knowledge emerges our sense of place, our language, our ceremonies, our cultural identities, and our ways of life. As knowledge keepers pass away, the continued existence and viability of TK is threatened. It is crucially important to preserve the diverse teachings in TK and employ them to strive for balance among the physical, the spiritual, emotional, and intellect, and all things that encompass ‘wolakota’ [to be a complete human being].”

— Albert White Hat, Sr., Sicangu Lakota

A Responsible Community Partnership...

- ✓ Meaningfully and respectfully engages community members as partners;
- ✓ Recognizes past injustices caused by irresponsible research practices;
- ✓ Builds trust and relationships with communities;
- ✓ Respects traditional knowledge and allows community values and perspectives to guide the partnership;
- ✓ Fosters transparent, open communication;
- ✓ Becomes active and present in the community.

How Do We Respect Traditional Knowledge?

ETHICS

Fostering the importance of culture & the right to self-determination

KNOWLEDGE

Fostering a healthy, holistic way of life & cultural resiliency

PRACTICE

Fostering & engaging community involvement



Shirley Lewis, Squamish Nation



Why Are Responsible Community Partnerships Important?

Even though trusted partnerships and research practices have emerged, we still have much to learn as we find a common path forward towards just and equitable research in Indigenous communities. It is important for community members to become empowered to promote health and well-being for sustainable cultural resiliency. Positive courses of action require transforming misguided practices in order to rebuild trust. Although the concept of responsibility may seem simple, in reality there is no “one-size fits all” approach.

Some Examples:

- Center for Aboriginal Health Research: <http://cahr.uvic.ca>
- Center for Alaska Native Health Research: <http://www.uaf.edu/canhr/>
- Haskell Environmental Research Studies Center: <http://www.nsfepcor.ku.edu/hers/index-hers.html#program>
- Kisapa Consulting: <http://www.kiksapa.com/>
- Northwest Indian College, Muckleshoot Food Sovereignty Project: <http://www.nwic.edu/content/muckleshoot-food-sovereignty>
- Native Peoples, Native Homelands: <http://www.nativepeoplesnativehomelands.org>



Center for Genomics & Healthcare Equality

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