Guidelines for Indigenous-Led Research and Annotated References

Introduction

The purpose of this discussion paper is to assist both Indigenous and ally researchers to better understand what is meant by *Indigenous-led research.* At its foundational core Indigenous-led research reinforces four specific commitments to Indigenous peoples. First it strengthens and supports Indigenous self-determination, autonomy, and sovereignty. It is respectfully grounded in ethical relationships with Indigenous peoples and privileges reciprocity in those relationships. Second it privileges Indigenous worldviews and research designs. Third, Indigenous-led research re-envisions research as conceptualized, developed, implemented, assessed and disseminated from the perspectives of Indigenous peoples, communities and nations. Indigenous peoples have authority to evaluate the quality or significance of Indigenous-led research enacted by and with them, and the role of spirit in this process. Fourth, Indigenous-led research requires a decoloniality from harmful dominant research practices. It aims to assist Indigenous researchers and allies to holistically identify, question and reject complicity in the perpetuation of these harms. It encourages researchers to question the scope of research, who it includes, who is left out, and why. The methodology of this paper is meant to assist researchers to better understand how Indigenous peoples conceptualize holistic Indigenous-led research through story-telling and explanation.

Through privileging the unique characteristics of Indigenous-led research, this paper offers suggestions to Indigenous and ally researchers as they weave research paths through multiple epistemologies. It posits that Indigenous research design involves more than the research questions, theoretical frameworks and world views or methodologies. Indigenous-led research is holistic. This means that specific methods of developing and honoring complex, multi-dimensional Indigenous data collection and analysis, ethical considerations and policies for dissemination are unique to specific Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing.

This paper was requested by the international UNESCO - DECODE project which is funded by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The DECODE project is led by the UNESCO Co-Chairs in Community Based Research and Social Responsibility in Higher Education at the University of Victoria in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, and the Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) non-profit organization based in New Delhi, India.

It is a central tenet of Indigenous writing for the author to practice positional transparency. Being grounded in my own Indigenous identity and identifying the perspectives that shape these Indigenous-led research guidelines is important. It is written from the perspective of a Saulteaux / Ojibway Indigenous woman research academic employed in a mid-size Canadian university. This western institution is located on the unceded and occupied lands of the Secwepemc people in present-day Kamloops, British Columbia, Canada.

The eight aims of this paper include:

(1) identification and discussion of principles of Indigenous world views,
(2) premises of Indigenist research,
(3) principles of Indigenous-led research,
(4) Indigenous methodologies,
(5) Indigenous research methods,
(6) Indigenous research guidelines and ethics,
(7) Indigenous-led research stories and
(8) key lessons learned from Indigenous-led research.

Since this paper is written from the perspective of one Indigenous academic-based researcher, any errors or omissions are the responsibility of the author.

The ten aims of this paper include
(1) identification and discussion of principles of Indigenous world views,
(2) the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and research,
(3) premises of Indigenist research,
(4) principles of Indigenous-led research,
(5) Indigenous methodologies,
(6) Indigenous research methods,
(7) Indigenous research guidelines and ethics,
(8) Indigenous-led research stories and
(9) Musqueam witnessing, African and Indian research
(10) key lessons learned from Indigenous-led research.

Due to the fact that this paper is written from the perspective of one Indigenous academic-based researcher, any errors or omissions are the responsibility of the writer.

Principles of Indigenous world views

Each Indigenous community and nation holds knowledge that is specific to their world

view/s and are typically based in their relationships since time immemorial to their holistic environment. Much of this knowledge is transmitted through their specific oral traditions, languages, stories, songs, dances and ways of knowing, being, doing. It is also transmitted through their holistic physical, emotional, mental and spiritual knowledge, and ceremonial ways of interacting with their environments.

This cyclical Indigenous knowledge is dependent upon relationships and connections to living and non-living beings and entities, including the land, water, sky, animals and peoples. In many instances, Indigenous knowledges were disrupted due to colonization influences which forcibly imposed foreign structures upon Indigenous peoples. For this paper, a few structural examples include colonizing languages, religions, governments and policies, health care, resource extraction and allocation, child welfare, education, and research. ~~Globally~~ Indigenous peoples around the world are struggling to address these colonizing influences in myriad ways. One targeted effort we explore in this paper~~,~~ is the way~~s~~ we are reasserting our inherent rights to dream, plan, implement, and review research that is meaningful to ourselves, our communities, and nations.

Writing for a global audience, this Indigenous guideline paper takes the perspective that there are many truths related to research, and that these truths are dependent upon individual experiences. It is also based on Indigenous worldviews that everything is alive and has a spirit. For example, a common truth is that our oldest Indigenous ancestor is the rock that forms the basis of our lands. Many traditional Indigenous beliefs include the notion that everything is alive, all beings are equal in value and the land is sacred. Commonly, the planet we inhabit is known as Mother Earth in that all life flows from her primary source. All life is dependent on her well-being, and Indigenous peoples' original instructions are to care for her. This is the perspective of many Indigenous peoples that inhabit Turtle Island, known to others as North America due to its shape as a turtle when viewed from outer space.

In addition to our physical world, the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the spiritual world is of critical importance. These relationships are supported by ceremonies
practiced by Indigenous peoples, which at times may be shared openly with researchers and at other times are not. These ceremonial protocols and practices guide and inform connections between Indigenous peoples and the spirit world for our collective well-being. A basic underlying Indigenous teaching is that human beings are the least important to our collective well-being in the world. Indigenous peoples believe that we cannot exist without the land, air, water, plants and animals however, they can exist

without us. In western beliefs this is the exact opposite in that historical Christian teachings place the most important beings as a singular White male God figure, White male leadership in government and commerce and in the Christian church. White women, people of colour, the land, air, water, animals and plants are far down the list in importance. It is this basic difference in holistic world views that roots research led by Indigenous peoples and forms the premises of Indigenist research. The next section identifies the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous Research.

UNDRIP and Indigenous Research

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) provides a foundational and inspirational framework for ethical and respectful Indigenous research. Several articles strongly support Indigenous control over research processes, data, and knowledge systems. It remains one of the most comprehensive international statements of Indigenous rights ever created. It had a major impact on how research involving Indigenous peoples is designed, conducted and shared. Specifically, it has strengthened the direction whereby Indigenous scholars lead research teams, the development of community-controlled research institutions and increasing numbers of universities adopting Indigenous research policies.

The UNDRIP document shifts research from something done on Indigenous peoples to research that is done with, by and for us. Explicitly, the inclusion of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) in articles 18, 19 and 32 requires that Indigenous peoples choose whether to participate in research, are fully informed about goals, risks and outcomes, and give consent before research begins. It limits “parachute research” where outsiders collect data, leave the communities or nations, and fail to report findings or outcomes. These articles clearly identify that communities must approve the research and can withdraw their consent at any time. Arising from the UNDRIP document, communities guide methods, interpretation, and use of results. Further, UNDRIP aligns research with community priorities and not just academic ones. It is why frameworks such as community-based participatory research and Indigenous methodologies are widely used.

UNDRIP articles 11 and 31 recognize rights to cultural knowledge, oral histories and traditional ecological knowledge. In practice this means that Indigenous communities have rights to own their data, and researchers must respect protocols around sacred or restricted knowledge. Principles such as Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP0 in Canada align closely with UNDRIP.

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Significant work exists in UNDRIP that requires respect for Indigenous cultures and institutions. For example, in community protocols there is direction to follow Elders guidance and to request ceremonial permissions. Researchers are encouraged to recognize Indigenous ways of knowing and viewing that as equal to Western Science. Ethics approval often includes community review processes, not only university boards.

The UNDRIP encourages sharing results in accessible ways (not just in academic journals), supporting capacity-building in terms of training and co-authorship, and ensuring findings are useful from the perspectives of Indigenous peoples.

In Canada the government has committed to implementing the UNDRIP through laws like the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. This affects research by requiring institutions to align policies with the UNDRIP, strengthening Indigenous governance over research and reinforcing ethical standards like Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2) Chapter 9 regarding research involving First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples. TCPS 2 Chapter 9 was created to address a long history of unethical and extractive research and to align research practices with principles like those in the UNDRIP.

The UNDRIP was developed through two and a half decades of collaboration, negotiation and work by Indigenous leaders, nation-states and United Nations bodies. Its aspirational message is credited with bringing Indigenous knowledge to the international forefront of issues concerning Indigenous peoples. Indigenous representatives from around the world directly shaped the text, and the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations began its drafting work in 1982. Their work was furthered by the UN human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly. It was officially adopted on September 13, 2007 by the UN General Assembly. However, the process was lengthy because it involved reconciling Indigenous sovereignty and land rights with existing state laws. Much like the complexities inherent in Indigenous-led research, it took time to negotiate sensitive issues such as self-determination, culture, language and land ownership.

Key UNDRIP Articles Relevant to Research

• Article 3 – Right to Self-Determination:
Indigenous Peoples have the right to determine their political, economic, social, and cultural development. This includes research that aligns with their priorities and protocols.

• Article 18 – Participation in Decision-Making:
Indigenous Peoples have the right to participate in decision-making in matters affecting their rights. Research must involve Indigenous leadership and community collaboration.

• Article 19 – Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC):
States must obtain Indigenous Peoples' free, prior, and informed consent before implementing measures that may affect them. This applies directly to research planning and execution.

• Article 31 – Cultural and Intellectual Property:
Indigenous Peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect, and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and cultural expressions—including research-related knowledge and data.

• Article 32 – Development and Resources:
Indigenous Peoples can determine priorities for development or use of their lands and resources, which includes environmental and land-based research.

Implications for Research Practice

As demonstrated above, UNDRIP transforms research into a process that is consent-based, community-driven, culturally grounded, ethically accountable and intentionally beneficial to Indigenous peoples. In addition, UNDRIP helps to ground research in Indigenous rights and self-determination and supports work that is led by or co-created with Indigenous communities and guided by OCAP or equivalent principles. It is recognized as the foundational document identifying Indigenous rights on a global basis. The protection of Indigenous intellectual property is a cornerstone in respectful Indigenous research design.

Despite the many ways that Indigenous research benefits from the UNDRIP principles and articles, there is still widespread Indigenous disappointment with the accommodations that were required to have the UNDRIP formally adopted by the UN General Assembly. Specific criticisms include concerns about limits of UNDRIP, lack of implementation and power. While UNDRIP is a declaration adopted by the United Nations, it is not a treaty or enforceable by law. This means that governments can

endorse it but ignore it because there are no direct penalties for violations, rights like land, self-determination, and consent are not automatically enforceable in courts. A major criticism is that it recognizes rights but does not guarantee them. For example, UNDRIP says that states must obtain Indigenous consent, but in practice governments sometimes interpret this as consultation, not actual consent. What this means is that issues such as resource extraction proceed with projects even after communities say no. Unfortunately, unethical research continues to be conducted in much the same way where true and meaningful consent by all Indigenous partners is not sought.

This Indigenous scholar argues that UNDRIP does not fully recognize sovereignty and keeps Indigenous nations subordinate to states. It stops short of recognizing full nation-to-nation equality. Countries such as Canada have been slow to implement UNDRIP and it is uneven. For example UNDRIP exists but many communities still face land disputes, boil-water advisories, and resource conflicts. Governments may "adopt the language" but lack structural change. With respect to Indigenous-led research similarities exist in that universities may adopt the language, but Western ways of doing research remain the primary focus. While many Indigenous peoples are increasingly aware of their research rights, not all are comfortable challenging White, Western institutional ways of conducting research. However, there are more examples of Indigenous community-based ethics processes and boards under development.

UNDRIP affirms Indigenous Peoples' right to be active agents in research—not merely subjects. Ethical research with Indigenous communities must center Indigenous voices, laws, and leadership, ensuring full control over their knowledge systems and data. The next section identifies the key premises of Indigenous research.

Premises of Indigenist Research

Indigenist research is a name for a philosophy that guides research between people, community and nations. It teaches critical ways to act to demonstrate researchers' willingness to be guided and educated by Indigenous Elders, knowledge keepers, traditional knowledge and language holders, and community-identified ways of knowing, being and doing.

Due to the colonial-imposed trauma and violence on Indigenous peoples, researchers must be trauma and violence informed and educated. They must be committed to practice in ways that do not retraumatize participants. They must be cognizant that trauma is always present in the community in various forms and may often surface during research processes. Traumatization can occur intentionally and non-intentionally. Community members, researchers and students must be aware and prepared to

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address potential trauma and violence in the research process. This speaks to the importance of pre-research planning, identification and agreement to offer trauma and violence-informed resources to participants prior to, during and after information gathering. Researchers must be honest about their level or lack of trauma and violence-informed self-awareness, ability, cultural background and experience. Additionally, researchers must be aware of the applicability of their professional skills and understanding of factors that may negatively affect their behavior, such as the dynamics of poverty and empathy. Researchers must recognize inherent bias within their own culture if they are not from the Indigenous peoples' culture being researched and the level of their understanding of that culture. Finally, if culturally appropriate resources are not available to or accessible by potential research participants, researchers must postpone research activities until these supports are both in place. For example, the inclusion of Elders and Youth from the community could be employed as paid "research advisors" as a good first step. Another culturally appropriate resource is the development of an Indigenous Research Advisory Board made up of Indigenous Elders, Youth, community members, professionals, language speakers and traditional knowledge holders from the specific community or communities involved in the research. The purpose of such an Advisory is to guide the research process, researchers and to trouble shoot issues of concern. Research teams could also benefit from traditional healers, others skilled in conflict resolution, and clearly detailed Research Agreements. These agreements should detail time frames for resolution, those that will be involved, graduated steps in the resolution process and the outcomes should the conflict remain unresolved. This is especially significant as conflict will invariably arise owing to cultural misunderstandings or unethical practices.

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Another premise of Indigenist research teaches that researchers and others learn best or most effectively about other cultures by spending time in and learning from community members. Sometimes this means involvement in grassroots activities, other times it means that researchers become volunteers in various community events, building trusting and respectful relationships over time. It is important that these pre-research relationships extend to many Indigenous peoples, not simply one or two people from a community. The reasons for this are many and varied and include how researchers may become viewed in community alliances, which will not necessarily be known to outsiders. These alliances may ensure that researchers are trusted or alternatively be viewed with suspicion by factions within the community.

Despite these potential connective issues that may or may not be known to outside researchers, Indigenous research is not simply about cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, cultural competence or cross-cultural practice. Rather successful research

begins with and is guided by respectful community connections. It is key to understand that Indigenist research and Indigenous knowledge is contextual, and temporal.

While Indigenous peoples share commonalities, there are also key differences. Indigenous-led research prioritizes knowledges between people who share experiences, context, time, and circumstances. It also makes space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers and participants to share different sets of knowledge. This is the notion at the center of Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall's Two-Eyed Seeing guiding principle that encourages integration of Indigenous and western ways of knowing. This model recognizes the strengths of both knowledge systems to achieve a more holistic or comprehensive understanding of the world and dynamic research. Other nations, such as the Tsilhqot'in, among many others, have advanced a similar model known as the Two-Legged Walking model to recognize the strengths of both western and Tsilhqot'in ways of knowing in research.

These perspectives show that knowledge is not necessarily discrete, however they can facilitate deeper connections to another set of knowledge. This work is predicated on abilities to connect to other peoples and their perceptions, experiences, values, and beliefs. This increases the possibility that researchers and participants can access one another's knowledge set. The caveat is that if researchers cannot recognize the foundation (their value and belief system) of their own knowledge set, then moving to another set is very difficult. Finally, according to Hart (2016) it is not appropriate to judge another set of knowledge until one is conscious of their own knowledge set and its scope, biases and limitations. Additionally, one must wait until they have established an understanding of the foundation of this other knowledge set from the perspective of the people who hold the knowledge set, and one's understanding is acknowledged by the people with that other knowledge set.

What are the principles of Indigenous-led research?

This section aims to describe and discuss the principles of Indigenous-led research. Specifically, it identifies that Indigenous-led research respects and privileges the research needs of Indigenous communities, societies, or individuals. This section identifies four of the seven key principles by Sto:lo and St'at'imc retired professor Dr. Jo-Ann Archibald's (2008) book Indigenous Storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body and spirit. In addition it privileges the research work of Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) and Nakata (2004).

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Indigenous-led research principles focus on specific Indigenous knowledge, cultures, and experiences and matters of importance identified by Indigenous peoples. Indigenous research methods arise from Indigenous world views and teachings, which are different from Western science methods. Indigenous-led research is meant to primarily benefit Indigenous peoples, communities and nations.

Embedding the principles of Indigenous-led research into university settings is a complicated matter in that it is complex, highly problematic and deeply personal work. It ruptures the status quo sense of comfort and complacency, not-knowing or not-seeing, that is embedded in Western approaches to knowledge production, interrogation, validation and dissemination.

Additionally, it can create tensions in cross cultural relationships. According to Nakata (2004), it uncovers personal, systemic, and institutional racism and inequities. Further, it uncovers unsettling experiences in our shared history in Canada while being profoundly challenging for Indigenous / non-Indigenous educators and students. Extrapolating from Gaudry & Lorenz's (2018) work to identify meaningful decolonizing and Indigenizing efforts within universities, Indigenous faculty envision the wholesale overhaul of the academy to fundamentally reorient knowledge production based on balancing power relations between Indigenous peoples and Canadians. This aims to transform the academy and research into something dynamic and new. This reorienting has the potential to disrupt relationships in which non-Indigenous researchers have typically held the power position for decades, while Indigenous peoples were viewed as the data sources to be mined.

According to retired Sto:lo and St'at'imc Nation academic Dr. Jo-ann Archibald (Q'um Q'um Xiiem) there are a number of principles inherent in Indigenous-led research. She identifies them in her book regarding knowledge gained from Coast Salish Elders "Indigenous Storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body and spirit (2008)". In it she reflects on Indigenous pedagogies, the role of storytelling in education, ways to help children and other learners make story-meaning and considerations for using Indigenous stories as a research method. She writes about the role that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples must initially set out to get "story ready" and to learn from basic Indigenous world views and teachings to prepare for the education work to come. For the purposes of this paper, we will focus on the following basic teachings from her book as a guide to getting ready to do research work.

Archibald (2008) identifies the first teaching as respect. She views respect for Indigenous peoples, cultures and knowledges as the premise for all that come after. In Indigenous-led research this means that Indigenous peoples must be equally involved in

the research issue identification, funding applications, ethics processes with other community, university or organizational partners, in all publications or presentations. Secondly, she views reciprocity as a two-way exchange between researchers and Indigenous communities. For example, as a student researcher, they will gain a course mark or degree. However, an important question is to ask, “In what ways will the community that you are working with benefit?” This is a conversation that must be prioritized by researchers in the process of getting ready to do the research work, and an agreed-upon goal is clearly identified from the community perspective/s.

Thirdly is the basic teaching of responsibility. This means that researchers are responsible for their actions and the positive or negative impact of their research, as well as any harm to the community. When the research is Indigenous-led versus non-Indigenous-led, the ramifications are markedly culturally and proportionately different. It is one thing to be held accountable by a professional university research ethics board when community harms are conducted by Indigenous or non-Indigenous researchers. It is another when Indigenous researchers are held accountable by their personal networks, their parents, grandparents, aunts or uncles who may live in, or have long term connections to the people involved in the research project/s. The magnitude of relational injury cannot be overstated when research harms have been perpetrated against Indigenous participants. Fourthly, this relational accountability means that in Indigenous-led research, researchers are accountable to the communities they work with. Typically, these are long term relationships, and do not end with the end of the project. The ramifications for Indigenous-led researchers can be life long, whereas non-Indigenous researchers may simply seek employment in another research hub or university without similar repercussions.

Indigenous-led research methodologies

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The terms Indigenous-led research, Indigenous research and Indigenist research are closely related, but they are not the same. The difference primarily concerns who is leading the work, the political stance, and the purpose of the research.

The broad approach of Indigenous research refers to research that involves Indigenous peoples, communities and knowledge. It uses Indigenous perspectives, methods and ethics. Some key features are that it can be done my Indigenous researchers or allies (non-Indigenous researchers). Indigenous research emphasizes respect, relationship building, and community engagement. It may include interviews, story-telling, land based learning, and community-based participatory research. One way of thinking about it is research with Indigenous peoples, done in a good and ethical way.

Indigenist or Indigenous-led research refers to research that is specific and explicitly political. It refers to research that is led by Indigenous people, for Indigenous communities, is grounded in self-determination and resistance to colonial systems. Some key features is that the research has a clear political purpose, whether that is decolonization, liberation or social justice. It challenges Western research as a tool of colonialism. It prioritizes Indigenous sovereignty, Indigenous ways of knowing, community benefit and transformation. One way to think of Indigenous-led research is as a tool of Indigenous resistance and self-determination.

Understanding the difference is important because not all "Indigenous research" is decolonizing. Some research can follow ethics such as the TCPS 9 but still serve academic goals more than the community goals. Indigenist research pushes the boundaries by asking who benefits from this research, who controls the knowledge, and does this support Indigenous sovereignty?

There are many active elements between communities and Indigenous-led research methodologies. Primarily these are used to determine (1), how agreements are made about what is asked, (2) how it is asked, and /or the language in which it is asked, (3) how things are explored, (4) having explicit agreements about how data is to be used and by whom? (5) agreements about how research findings are interpreted and analyzed, (6) and who owns the data? In Indigenist-led research, the community owns, controls, and protects the data. A fundamental premise is that the Indigenous or non-Indigenous researcher is part of the process, but the Indigenous community has authority over and holds the data. This agreement must be in writing and signed by the research authorities as part of the research pre-planning process or "getting ready to do the research" process.

For example, the development of the Secwepemc Nation Research Ethics Guidelines (SNREG) occurred during 2019-2022. These are the unceded lands upon which this paper is written. The document states that

> "The Secwepemc Nation has been knowledge making and researching for millennia. These Guidelines serve as a research declaration by the Secwepemc Nation; that all intellectual property developed within the Secwepemc Nation belongs to the people of the Secwepemc Nation, and that research undertaken within the Secwepemc Nation must be with approval of the Nation… The main purpose of Secwepemc Nation Research Ethics Guidelines is to provide a guide for research that involves the peoples, land and resources of the Secwepemc Nation… the Secwepemc Nation remains the guardians of any and all research

pertaining to the nation, across its diversity, geographical boundaries, language, history, culture, worldview and sciences" (2022, p. 2).

Additionally, Secwepemc research plans and outcomes must be Secwepemc in focus, identify Secwepemc ownership and Secwepemc-led data analysis, and have formal training opportunities to build Secwepemc researchers.

The eleven SNREG are identified in both the Secwepemctsin language and English. The English translation is as follows, (1) We will respect Secwepemc knowledge, (2) This is our law and the law remains. No one can go around this law. We will follow Secwepemc laws, (3) We will honour each other, (4) We will respect equality in knowledge, (5) we will work in partnership, (6) We will honour that knowledge is sacred, (7) We will be courageous with thoughts and thinking, (8) We will speak truth regarding Secwepemc knowledge, (9) We will be active in transformation with Secwepemc Nation, (10) We will recognize Elders and Knowledge Keepers, (11), We will uphold knowledge through Secwepemctsin (2022, p. 5) In terms of honouring that knowledge is sacred, the SNREG states that the Secwepemc Nation retains intellectual property rights over research completed within Secwepemculecw (the unceded lands of the 17-member Secwepemc Nation). Many First Nations in BC have reached out to the Secwepemc to ask for their SNERG and talks are underway to help develop Ethics Guidelines for those Nations.

What are some examples of Indigenous-led research methods?

Indigenous-led research methods are as varied and developmental as the Nations undertaking research. Some typical research methods include storytelling, personal reflection, the use of sharing circles, the inclusion of ceremonies, art creation made from on-the-land resources, dance arising from families and community cultural practices, on-the-land experiential learning, dream journaling and cultural expressions. At the basis of decision-making are six questions that can help to shape the chosen research methods. In the "getting ready to research" process, these questions can be used to identify diverse perspectives, values and beliefs, ways of knowing, being and doing of the people at the table. Determining Indigenous-led research methods can begin with a round table discussion of the following questions.

How can we build respectful relationships between the topic we are studying and each person at the table, the community, the nation?

How can we build respectful relationships between ourselves and research participants?

How can we dream, envision, design, implement, analyze and disseminate research in ways that are relevant to Indigenous peoples?

How can we demonstrate the fundamental principles of respect and reciprocity in our research relationship with Indigenous peoples? How do Indigenous peoples/communities benefit from the research relationship? Who owns the data?

How can we reflect our responsibility to towards ethical research with Indigenous peoples? What is the role that each of us can take? Does the nation have any documented research that identifies their own Indigenous research principles?

How can we better understand how our values and beliefs, Indigenous and institutional ways of knowing, being and doing might be a barrier in our research with Indigenous / marginalized peoples? How will we jointly address disagreements?

Indigenous Research Guidelines and Ethics in Canada

Some examples of Research Guidelines and ethics in Canada begin with reflection and introspection. It can be as simple as a roundtable teaching involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous research relationships. Each person can be asked to identify one Indigenous-based or university-based research guideline or ethics guideline pertaining to Indigenous peoples and come to the table ready to teach it or lead a discussion with others. A first question can be "In what ways do your personal/professional ethics or this guideline help to build respectful relationships between you and Indigenous peoples/research participants? What may be the repercussions to you personally or professionally if these research ethics are breached?" A second question may be "In what ways do you continually examine your own bias? Why or why not?" A third question may be "What is your role as an ethical researcher in this relationship with Indigenous peoples and what are your responsibilities? A fourth question may be "Ethically, what are you contributing or giving back to your relationship with Indigenous peoples? Is the sharing, growth and learning that is taking place reciprocal and supported by this guideline?"

Adapted from Shawn Wilson, (2008). Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing (p. 77).

Indigenous Nations in Canada and globally can benefit from research guidelines which are identified below and discussed in greater detail within the attached annotated reference list.

Secwepemc Nation Research Ethics Guidelines (2022)

Musqueam First Nation (Vancouver BC) document: One heart, one mind. Comprehensive Community Plan (2018). This plan brings together three streams of knowledge: (1) traditional cultural knowledge of community members; (2) experience, planning, and resources from Musqueam's leadership and administration; and (3) the expertise and professional commitment from the participating universities. These streams are united by eight Musqueam guiding principles: (1) participatory; (2) strategic; (3) Musqueam; (4) thoughtful; (5) entrepreneurial; (6) practical; (7) educational; and 8) learning and sharing (Johnson & Sparrow, 2019).

Métis Ethical Principles : (Six principles of Metis health research)

Guidelines for Research Involving Inuit

OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access & Possession) -
Self-determination in research

Tri Council Policy Statement 2 – The Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. Chapter 9 TCPS – Research with FN, Inuit and Metis peoples of Canada

Research Stories

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This section shares research stories and borrows from four of Archibald's (2008) "Storywork" principles, specifically respect, reciprocity, reverence and relationships. It also considers the work of Jennifer Wemigwans (2018), in "A digital bundle: Protecting and promoting Indigenous knowledge online" and Shawn Wilson's "Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods" (2008).

However, we begin with a passage in "Decolonizing Methodologies" written by Maori researcher Linda T. Smith (2021) that reads like an Indigenous research cautionary tale. She writes that

> "From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term 'research' is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary. When mentioned in many indigenous contexts, it stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful. It is so powerful that indigenous people even write poetry about research. The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered

history for many of the world's colonized peoples. It is a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity" (p.1).

With this reality in mind, it is important for both Indigenous-led and non-Indigenous led research teams begin to get ready to do the work in ceremony. Typically, our first meetings begin in prayer, drumming, singing and sharing food. This is a joint initiative with funds provided by the research teams, and resources, space and cultural work done in collaboration with the community leadership. The key issue is inviting all people to a safe space, welcoming them through appropriate protocols aimed at building trusting relationships.

Respect and Disrespect in the Research Relationship

Taking the time to understand how research has been conducted in the past is a key starting place for any new research relationship with Indigenous peoples. One of the most powerful openings that I witnessed began with a question after the protocols were introduced and managed by the research lead. She asked "Can anyone help me understand how research was conducted in your community in the past? What worked well? What didn't work well? What do you suggest that we do the same? What do you suggest that we do differently?" Then all people were quiet until the community members began to share their research experiences. It became profoundly clear that some community members felt betrayed, did not understand that they could refuse to participate and did not understand what informed consent was. Others felt trapped in participating because they received funds and thought that meant they had to bare their trauma for the compensation. It was a deeply troubling experience that ultimately led to a much more respectful research relationship. One of the student researchers shared during the drive away from the community that "The people are only asking to be treated with respect, nothing more and nothing less. We can do that but there is a lot of betrayal to address if we are going to do this in a healing way".

Making Space for Reciprocity and Spirit in the Research Relationship

Shawn Wilson (2008) wrote that if research doesn't change you, then you haven't done it right. He also wrote that "unfortunately Indigenous researchers have often had to explain how their perspective is different from that of dominant system scholars; dominant scholars have seemingly needed no such justification in order to conduct their research" (p.55). One research study that was both Indigenous-university and community-led occurred with the Musqueam First Nation (2014-2018). It was based on a long-term relationship between a Musqueam community member/leader and an Indigenous university professor. The community member identified several Musqueam

youth who were experiencing drug addictions and houselessness. The Indigenous university researcher asked what she could do to help and then listened. The Musqueam research lead spoke about wanting the youth to re-learn canoeing ways in the community, to regain their health and to bring pride back to the canoeing community. She said that no Musqueam canoes had been built in over 30 years and soccer had replaced the traditional practice. She asked if $500,000 in research funds could be found, then she had plans to use it to revitalize the canoeing practice. The nation was prepared to donate funds to build a canoe carving shed and donate Musqueam reserve-based land (up to one acre) for the proposed carving shed to be used by all the community members. In addition to revitalizing the canoeing practice, the youth would be supported to enter a canoe into the British Columbia West coast canoe journey slated for the next year. She had many plans. So the $500,000 was what she was asking of their university partner. The community and university-based Indigenous researchers agreed to inform each other should that amount of research funding appear. The university researcher immediately drove back to the university campus office, parked, walked to her office and turned on the computer.

The first email at the top of the scroll was a call for proposals from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) national funding body for Indigenous projects up to $500,000. Within one week of forwarding the email to the Musqueam community-based researcher, a planning meeting occurred at Musqueam with Elders, knowledge keepers, teachers, youth, social workers and elected officials. This was the team that formed the written proposal which was prayed over by the Elders. After more letters of community-based support were received than could be uploaded onto the computer system, the proposal was submitted and seven months later SSHRC sent official notice of $500,000 approved funding. Their personal note said, “Good luck, we’re with you all”. From this experience, we learned that spirit walks in Indigenous research projects.

Many of Musqueam’s dreams and determination to revitalize their traditional canoeing practices for their youth came true. When a Coast Salish canoe is made ready for a journey a series of cultural protocols are followed to awaken its spirit. Cultural protocols include traditional customs that guide cultural practices, actions, and approaches. These protocols and practices may become known through an oral tradition and can include prayers, songs, ceremony, language, and physical attributes of participants and objects. This research project was given the name "Awakening the Spirit" (ATS). It demonstrates how Musqueam, universities, and potentially other Northwest Coast Indigenous canoe families can work together to mobilize this traditional as well as academic knowledge. The focus of the ATS project is to awaken the spirit of cultural practice and maintain it

for future generations. It is also meant to work towards the strengthening of relationships between social work, forestry, and education professions, and the Musqueam people (Johnson & Sparrow, 2019, pp.9-10).

The role of witnessing is particularly important to many of the West Coast First Nations communities who are from oral tradition nations. This is the case with Musqueam First Nation.

Oral Traditions and the Role of Witnessing in Musqueam Community Research and Ceremonies

The role of witnesses in the oral traditions of Coast Salish communities on the Westcoast of Canada extends into their histories to time immemorial. Their important work may be reflected in the oral traditions and supportive practices of other Indigenous communities. For that purpose, and to help researchers to open research discussions regarding the importance of oral traditions with Indigenous communities, this paper will share the Musqueam practice. This passage is from the Johnson & Sparrow (2019) article *Pulling together in an Indigenous cultural revitalization canoe: Indigenous women's water and land-based research methodologies in action* in the Canadian Journal of Native Education.

Musqueam Witnessing Story:
As far back as we can recall, our Musqueam people have always followed the process to call witnesses to the cultural work that we do within families and community. This timeless tradition of witnessing as part of ceremony, for me, speaks to our Coast Salish identity as a public people. It is part of the oral traditions of Musqueam documentation and archive systems. The hiring of witnesses and the responsibilities attached to witnesses are also public in nature. Everything we do as Musqueam, how it is observed by others and passed on, is vital to the perpetuation of our ways of being and the transference of cultural treasures, knowledge, and histories within each family. It has been this way for thousands of years.

I had a conversation with Musqueam Elder and Coast Salish knowledge keeper, Shane Pointe, about the process of witnessing Musqueam people. He told me that historically when other villages travel to our big house to participate in a ceremony, they would always bring their own historian— their witness—with them. This was done automatically, just in case they were called upon to be a witness to the work in Musqueam at that gathering; they would have their most skilled history keepers ready and available to comply. Historically and after colonial contact, the family conducting

the ceremony would pay each witness by giving them a Hudson's Bay blanket, which was valued at fifty cents at that time. Over time, the leaders in the community decided that the families of witnesses may get more use out of monetary compensation for their services rather than blankets as payment for the work, so they may buy other items that families may need. Therefore, payment for witnesses shifted from blankets to fifty cents each. This form of payment has remained the same in our ceremonies since then. In the past, all attending villages would automatically bring their own witnesses with them to a ceremony in the Musqueam longhouse. Around the 1950s, there was a shift in this practice whereby the Musqueam host family would identify and personally invite their own witnesses to the work in advance. Then the other villagers knew they needed to bring their historians with them ahead of time, as they were going to be called to witness. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was yet another shift in practice whereby some Musqueam families would call many witnesses at once during an event and even include young people as some witnesses. The responsibilities of the witness in ceremony are critical. Witnesses are the historians of other villages and places. Traditionally, they are very seasoned in ceremony and know the ancestral names and histories of the family who calls upon them to witness. Before colonial contact, only one or two witnesses would be called during a ceremony, but now different families can call many witnesses at once. The highest priority of a witness in a Musqueam ceremony is to maintain the absolute accuracy of all the details in the work they have observed. This absolute accuracy is vital to the retelling of what was observed in their home communities to maintain this history for generations to come.

The traditional Musqueam protocol of calling witnesses today involves:

- The family identifies who will be a witness ahead of time.
- The hired speaker for the family calls the name of each witness out twice in public before the work begins.
- The witness is asked to listen, watch, and feel the work the family will conduct.
- Each witness is given fifty cents (two quarters) from each member of the family doing the work as payment.
- Upon conclusion of the ceremony/work, the witness stands before the family and shares what they have heard, seen, and felt in the work.
- The witness is paid by each member of the family again.
- The witness brings the message of what was heard, seen, and felt back to their home village (Johnson & Sparrow, 2019) pp. 26-27).

By 2025 Musqueam has carved and created 10 canoes, developed a rich youth canoeing program with committed and involved Elders, and a canoe carving shed that holds

carving instruction gatherings and programs for community members. The canoe revitalization is well under-way. This is research that changed both the lives of the university and community-based Indigenous researchers, and the lives of many others in Musqueam First Nation (Johnson & Sparrow, 2019). This is research that matters. It is one example that highlights the importance of research relationality, resurgence, and decolonial praxis, demonstrating how Indigenous methodologies connect community, environment, and identity. The article is grounded in personal narrative, ceremony, and place-based knowledge. In the paraphrased words of Cree research author Shawn Wilson (2008), if research has not changed you as a person, then you have not done it correctly. The next section focuses on Indigenous-led research in Africa and India. It aims to identify existing and emerging research guidelines and codes of practice developed out of necessity to protect vulnerable communities and peoples. It also offers tangible ways to address the need for research accountability, unethical research practices and practitioners.

Indigenous-led research in Africa and India

Indigenous-led research occurs globally with Indigenous peoples within their specific context. This paper includes two distinct global perspectives from Africa and India. These were included as homage to the DECODE's work in these two countries, and to recognize the careful maintenance of relationships within and between their respective countries. This paper does not emerge from these contexts specifically, so it cannot fully represent the diversity and complexity of these Indigenous worldviews. These examples are included as a respectful acknowledgement of the DECODE leadership and their decades of work to foster respectful research relationships with Indigenous peoples living there.

Africa: Indigenous-led research in Africa and India is grounded in the worldviews, cultural protocols, and knowledge systems of Indigenous communities. It differs from conventional research by prioritizing community leadership, self-determination, and relational ethics. Below is an overview of how Indigenous-led research is conducted in each region.

In Africa Indigenous-Led research approaches have unique philosophical foundations. For example, Ubuntu ("I am because we are") and Botho are foundational African philosophies that emphasize relationality, community, and interconnectedness. It mirrors Indigenous north American Indigenous approaches where knowledge is oral, experiential, and spiritually grounded, often passed through storytelling, rituals, symbol reflection and ceremonies. In many Indigenous contexts (such as community-led environmental stewardship and health promotions) participatory action research (PAR)

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principles and practices are adapted to meet the requirements of Indigenous-led research. Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) are valued as legitimate frameworks for research in agriculture, health, education, and climate adaptation. Use of oral traditions, songs, dances, and storytelling are recognized as data sources and dissemination tools.

Indigenous research in the African context (and many others outside North America) may be governed by local councils, Elders, or traditional leaders rather than university or community-based research ethics boards or formal, institutional bodies. Informed consent includes communal approval and often involves ritual or spiritual consultation.

The San Code of Research Ethics (South Africa).
This is a well-known example of a formal, community-developed rights-based ethical research protocol created by the San peoples of South Africa (also known as the Bushmen) in 2017. It is one of the first Indigenous-authored research ethics codes on the African continent and globally significant for asserting Indigenous data sovereignty and control over knowledge production.

The San Code of Research Ethics is a landmark in Indigenous research governance. It shifts the power dynamic from researchers to the community and provides a model for decolonizing research ethics globally. It is referenced widely in ethical research discourse and sets a precedent for other Indigenous nations developing their own protocols.

As is typical for global Indigenous peoples, the San have been the subject of extensive research—often without their consent, and frequently in ways that exploited their knowledge, imagery, and biological materials. In response to these ongoing injustices, the South African San Institute (SASI), in collaboration with the three main San councils (South African San Council, Xun Council, and Khwe Council), developed this code through a community consultation process over several years. The San Code includes five core ethical principles. These include:

1. **Respect** in that researchers must show respect for San knowledge, people, customs, and cultural values.
2. **Honesty** in that researchers must be honest about their goals, methods, and potential outcomes.
3. **Justice and Fairness** in that the benefits of the research should be shared fairly; San communities must be involved in determining what is fair.
4. **Care** in that research should not cause harm; researchers must be mindful of historical trauma and colonial research legacies.
5. **Process** in that the San must be involved in designing, approving, and overseeing the research process—including final approval of findings before publication.

It is critical to note that in the San Code, informed consent is collective, and not simply attached to an individual. In addition, researchers must sign legally binding research agreements with San representative bodies. The Code requires benefit-sharing, and the San retain rights to their intellectual property. Finally, the San councils act as gatekeepers and reviewers of all proposed research.
South African San Institute. (2017). *San Code of Research Ethics*. Retrieved from: https://www.globalcodeofethics.org

India: Indigenous (Adivasi)-Led Research Approaches

India's Indigenous communities are referred to as Adivasis, meaning "original inhabitants." They comprise over 100 million people across states like Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and the Northeast. While research with these communities is often rooted in community-based participatory research (CBPR), it is increasingly led by Adivasi scholars and Indigenous rights organizations. Their focus is primarily on land rights, forest governance, displacement from mining, cultural revitalization and language preservation. Increasingly the Adivasis are choosing to focus on health and nutrition practices rooted in forest-based knowledge. Their Indigenous epistemologies and knowledge are tied to land, forest, ancestors, and oral histories. Their research data and methods also include rituals, seasonal calendars, and intergenerational storytelling.

Challenges and Advocacy

Similarities exist between Canadian Indigenous peoples and India's colonial and caste-based structures. Research tells us that knowledge is often gendered and passed intergenerationally through storytelling, mentorship, and roles in ceremony. For example, in academia structures and publishing Indigenous and Adivasi voices are often marginalized. Movements like the Adivasi Academy (Tejgadh) and platforms like Lokvidya Jan Andolan aim to reclaim Indigenous knowledge production. Work is underway by Ganesh Devy and the People's Linguistic Survey of India (PLSI) to document Adivasi languages and worldviews. This is important and ongoing work. Grassroots organizations like ASHA, PRIA, Ekta Parishad, and Samvaad support Indigenous-led research in partnership with communities.

Community-based Politics in Indigenous-Led Research

In Indigenous contexts, it is important for outside researchers to be prepared to wait for community-based politics to work themselves through and know that it is not for researchers to be involved. The reasons for this are due to the length of time it takes for outsiders to develop an awareness and appreciation about how power, respect and boundaries arise in community-based research relationships. More specifically this

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refers to the internal decision making, relationships, and authority structures within a specific Indigenous community. It includes the internal issues within leadership whether that is an elected or hereditary council, or Elders. It could embody community priorities and tensions that outsiders may not be aware by virtue of not growing up or belonging to community family structures. At other times, historical relationships and colonial impacts such as residential schools, Indian day schools or hospitals, and family trauma may impact research relationships. Issues may be long-standing and convoluted, unclear to those not intimately involved in community processes. There may be differing opinions within community regarding who has the right to speak, share knowledge, or approve research. It is important to understand that these "politics" are not just about "conflict". They may also be legitimate systems of governance and sovereignty.

Without careful guidance from Indigenous knowledge holders and community members, non-Indigenous allies or Indigenous researchers from other communities or nations can create relationship and research conflicts without intending to do so. This is another reason to take the time to develop a community-based Indigenous research advisory council to help guide the research process. While it is primarily intended to protect the Indigenous peoples, communities and nations involved in the research process, it can also protect the researchers from involvement in matters that do not concern them.

When a researcher enters an Indigenous family, community or nation, they are stepping into a living political system, for being born an Indigenous person in Canada means being born into politics that shape our lives from cradle to grave. It means that Indigenous peoples have lived a history and life of exploitation by research and government. It reflects lives that have struggled for land, rights and basic recognition as Treaty partners with Canada. Indigenous peoples understand that research is never "neutral". It can empower certain voices, silence others and has the power to affect funding, policy and community relationships.

While it is important to know what researchers should do in Indigenous-led research, it is just as important to know what NOT to do. The list is long and includes direction to not interfere in internal Indigenous politics. This means that researchers should not take sides in family or community disputes, should not decide who is "right" within the community and offer your unsolicited opinion about why you think that way. Outsiders should not bypass leadership or established protocols in community.

Researchers would do well to not assume authority or expertise within the community; always acknowledge that the community members are the experts. Researchers should also understand that they are invited guests in the community, and they are not entitled

to be there. A good place to start is to publicly acknowledge that the research belongs to the community that provides the knowledge. It is important for researchers to understand that if conflict arises in research relationships, sometimes the ethical move is pause or withdraw. The sovereign decision-maker is the community, while the researcher is a guest with responsibilities. A respectful researcher listens more than they speak, follows protocols, and accepts limits on access and interpretation. In closing, researchers must respect that Indigenous communities have their own political systems and authority, and they must not interfere, dominate, or overstep their roles within those systems.

10 Key Lessons in Indigenous-led Research

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To be invited into Indigenous-led research, researchers must understand that they will be witness to hundreds of years of colonization. What this looks like in practice can appear destructive, overlapping and replication of vicious colonial practices. Researchers must be able to understand the reasons for lateral and interpersonal violence, personal, familial, community and nation-based trauma and unresolved grief. To not retraumatize vulnerable Indigenous peoples, all researchers must have a clear understanding of what it means to be trauma and violence informed before, during and after the research process. It is critical to ensure that all members of research teams are trained, and skilled in addressing this primary issue before entering research relationships with Indigenous peoples. The ways in which all team members can demonstrate patience and compassion, integrity, honesty and ethical standards that privilege Indigenous peoples must be an ongoing discussion. This is the bedrock upon which the following 10 key lessons are offered to those interested in conducting ethical, grounded and meaningful Indigenous-led research.

1. Research is Relational, Not Transactional

Indigenous research is rooted in relationships—not just data collection. Trust, kinship, and long-term engagement are prioritized over speed and output. Many communities require ceremony, protocol, and time before research begins.

2. Indigenous Peoples Define the Research Agenda

Research must be community-driven, not imposed from the outside. Projects must answer questions that matter to the people, not just academics or funders. Ask first, listen deeply, act second.

3. Knowledge is Sacred and Owned Collectively
Indigenous knowledge is often spiritual, oral, intergenerational, and context-specific. Research must respect intellectual property, data sovereignty, and cultural protocols (e.g., OCAP®, San Code).

4. Consent Must Be Ongoing and Collective
Informed consent is a living process involving community consensus, not a one-time checkbox. Requires engagement with governance structures, Elders, and councils.

5. Methodologies Must Reflect Indigenous Ways of Knowing
Common methods include storytelling, song, art, ceremony, land-based learning, traditional skills revitalization and language reclamation. However, this is not an exhaustive list or checkbox. It is important to ask and understand how Indigenous methodologies emerge from ontologies and ethics—not tools. Each community has unique ways of knowing, being and doing. What "works" in one community will not likely "work" in another. Researchers must be open to being learners and being taught by Indigenous-led processes.

6. Research Requires Humility, Patience, and Self-Awareness
Researchers must be aware of their own positionality, privilege, bias and assumptions. Decolonial research requires relinquishing control and embracing slow scholarship.

7. Research is a Site of Healing and Resistance
Indigenous-led research restores identity, revives culture, and resists colonial systems. For example, in the canoe revitalization project, it helped to reconnect youth to land, language, Elders, protocols, oral traditions and ceremony that is thousands of years old.

8. Data Sovereignty is Central
Communities must have Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®) of their data. For example, some global equivalents include Te Mana Raraunga (Māori), Maiam nayri Wingara (Australia), and the San Code (South Africa).

9. Western Institutions Must Change
Structural reform is needed in universities, ethics boards, publishing, and funding. True partnership redistributes power rather than simply 'including' Indigenous people. The time for change is now.

10. Research is Ceremony
As Dr. Shawn Wilson (2008) writes, 'Research is ceremony.' It begins in prayer, protocol, and mutual respect—not publication goals. Honest, respectful and ongoing discussions and agreements must be transparent. The questions of "Who is getting what out of this

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research relationship and work" must remain front and center. The work must be meaningful to the Indigenous peoples who lead with the determination to improve Indigenous lives.

In closing, when non-Indigenous researchers or allies want to collaborate with Indigenous communities, it is not just a methodological choice, rather there are ethical, political and relational implications. The expectations are higher than typical research because of history, sovereignty, and impacts of life.

In plain language this means that researchers cannot just "start a project". Their involvement requires an invitation and a relationship because collaboration is not researcher-driven, in the typical Western science practice. Researchers may have to spend months or years building trust before any research begins. One way of building that is by being of use in the community, volunteering for events, helping Elders or any other needs that the community may present. Being "seen" in the community and helping, or developing long term respectful relationships may still result in community avoidance with research, or the community may not respond or say "no". That decision must be respected because it reflects the concept of self-determination whereby communities choose whether research happens at all.

When an Indigenous-led research project happens, the community will define or help to lead the research. Researchers must accept that the original idea may change significantly or be rejected. The community may set priorities that do not align with academic timelines or funding. This is what is meant by shifting research from "on" communities to "with" and "by" communities. It means respecting that "nothing happens about us without us". Community protocols and governance means that each community has its own rules about who gives permission, how knowledge is shared and specific cultural or ethical protocols.

Hopefully, this paper has helped readers to understand that ethics approval from a university is insufficient. Researchers may need Band Council resolutions, to appear before a community based Indigenous Research Ethics board, Elder approval or community research agreements. A community may control how data is stored, who can access it, and determine how it is interpreted and published. Researchers should understand that they may not be able to publish freely without approval.

Researchers must understand that they are accountable to relationships, and not just to institutions. In Indigenous-led research, ethics are relational, and not just procedural. Researchers are responsible to Indigenous peoples, not just to their place of employment or university. If harm occurs, it affects real relationships, not just the

research project. In Indigenous-led research this means ongoing communication, returning results in meaningful ways and being present beyond the project. Due to the small size of Indigenous communities, creating harm as an Indigenous person has larger implications beyond oneself. Family members may be contacted and complaints or stories about research harm or unethical behaviour will reach them. Indigenous peoples can always get new jobs at new universities, however bringing shame to one's family because of harmful research actions is another matter. One cannot simply "get a new family". Reparations can be costly, and long term. This is not the same for non-Indigenous researchers or allies which may be why Indigenous researchers are inherently cautious in research relationships. We are cautious in who we bring into community based research relationships, because the actions of non-Indigenous peoples also reflect on our reputation as a trustworthy person.

At all times Indigenous and ally researchers must ask "What does the community gain?" They must also accept that academic timelines often clash with community realities, and flexibility is needed. Cultural humility is important, and researchers must practice ongoing self-reflection, be open to correction and understand that while one may make mistakes, we also have responsibilities to be accountable and repair harmed relationships. Throughout the research process, one learns to give up control, build real relationships, respect Indigenous authority and ensure that meaningful Indigenous-led research is meant to serve the community.

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Explores Kaupapa Māori research methodology, emphasizing

Bjørklund, I. (2000). Sami reindeer pastoralism as an Indigenous resource management system in northern Norway. Acta Borealia, 17(1), 103–118.
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Discusses the complex roles of researchers within Indigenous communities, addressing positionality, trust, and responsibility.

Cajete, G. (1994). Look to the mountain: An ecology of Indigenous education. Kivaki Press.
Blends Indigenous knowledge with environmental education, presenting a holistic, culturally based pedagogy grounded in Native American worldviews.

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. (2022). Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical conduct for research involving humans –

TCPS 2 (2018), Chapter 9: Research involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada.
Chapter 9 of the TCPS 2 (2022 update) outlines the ethical obligations for research involving Indigenous Peoples in Canada. It stresses the importance of community engagement, cultural protocols, and Indigenous governance over research processes. This section is foundational for researchers seeking ethics approval and conducting research

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This foundational text presents African-centred research methodologies that challenge Western paradigms. Chilisa emphasizes participatory, decolonizing approaches rooted in Ubuntu philosophy, Indigenous worldviews, and relational ethics. The book offers theoretical insights and practical tools for conducting respectful, community-based research with and for Indigenous peoples, especially in postcolonial contexts involving Indigenous participants or communities.

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This edited volume documents the crisis of language extinction among Adivasi and Indigenous communities in India. Contributors explore how language loss impacts cultural survival, identity, and sovereignty. The collection calls for urgent revitalization and protection of Indigenous languages as repositories of ecological, historical, and philosophical knowledge.

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Examines Indigenous movements in Latin America through a postdevelopment lens, advocating for pluriversal epistemologies and autonomy.

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This publication by the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC) outlines the OCAP® principles—Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession—which guide First Nations in asserting jurisdiction over their data. It discusses Indigenous data sovereignty and its ethical implications in research. The resource is essential for researchers working with First Nations communities, providing a framework for respectful, rights-based engagement.

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Gilbert, J. H., & Kohl, M. T. (2024). Special issue: Indigenous research and costewardship of wildlife [Editorial]. Journal of Wildlife Management, 88(6), e22625.
The editorial of the special issue of the Journal of Wildlife Management focused on Indigenous-led and collaborative research in wildlife stewardship. The authors emphasize the increasing recognition of Indigenous Knowledge (IK) in wildlife management and conservation science. They note that Indigenous governments steward over 850,000 km² across North America, often using place-based ecological knowledge developed over millennia. The editorial highlights efforts to center Indigenous voices, values, and research methodologies. It also discusses the intentional disruption of conventional Western publishing structures, allowing space for storytelling, community priorities, and Indigenous authorship. The editors describe collaborations with Tribal resource agencies and underscore the need for respect, long-term relationships, and co-governance in wildlife research. This piece serves as both a call to action and a reflection on shifting norms within academic publishing and ecological practice.

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This comparative study analyzes how post-secondary institutions in Canada and Aotearoa/New Zealand are indigenizing their curricula. Drawing on Indigenous and

settler experiences, the authors highlight best practices and challenges in implementing culturally responsive pedagogy. Emphasizing Indigenous epistemologies, the article offers insight into institutional change, decolonization, and meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities and knowledge holders.

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This chapter presents a strengths-based, culturally grounded framework for Indigenous community development, rooted in relational accountability and intergenerational knowledge. The authors draw on lived experiences and community-based practice to outline "wise practices" that reflect Indigenous worldviews and sovereignty. Useful for social workers, educators, and researchers seeking ethical and effective engagement with Indigenous communities

Johnson, S., & Smith, P. (2024). Coiling pine needles: Demonstrating allyship through a REDress reconciliation project InStead. Canadian Social Work Review.
This article examines a reconciliation-based arts project inspired by the REDress campaign, where education, social work students and faculty engage in allyship by coiling pine needles to honour Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG). The authors reflect on how creative expression, land-based learning, and cultural protocol foster deeper understandings of allyship, relational accountability, and social justice in Indigenous-settler collaborations.

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