



# Guidance For Research With Indigenous Communities And Participants

The purpose of this guideline is to provide information on conducting research involving First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in Canada.

## Background and Resources

Indigenous Peoples include persons who self-identify as being of First Nation, Inuit, or Métis descent. The University of Winnipeg recognizes the distinctiveness of all Indigenous community across Canada and is committed to partnering with Indigenous Peoples, and expanding knowledge related to the rights and responsibilities of the peoples in this area.

Generally, working with Indigenous groups or on Indigenous Land in a good way requires fostering meaningful relationships through trust building. This takes time (*sometimes years!*). There are many ways to work well with Indigenous communities and participants but all require formal consent, and most Indigenous governments and Nations have a formal or informal process for research and engagement consent. Below is a list of resources to start out.

- If you are interested in learning basic manners for engaging with Indigenous groups, see SAMHSA. (2009). "[Etiquette- Do's and Don'ts.](#)" CultureCard.
- For guidance on how to respectfully engage in research with indigenous peoples some potential guiding documents include:
  - Assembly of First Nations. (n.d.) [First Nations Ethics Guide on Research and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge.](#)
  - Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. (2018). [National Inuit Strategy on Research.](#) ITK
  - [The First Nations Principles of OCAP.](#) First Nations Information Governance Centre.
  - [CIHR Guidelines for Health Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples.](#)
  - [Tri-Council Policy Statement \(2\) Chapter 9, Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada.](#)
- If you need to learn more about different groups in Newfoundland and Labrador, see the [General Indigenous Peoples in Newfoundland and Labrador FAQ.](#)
- For an excellent guide to Canadian Indigenous priorities, politics, and histories, written from the perspective of someone who responds to settler questions about Indigenous research and issues, see: Vowel, C. (2016). [Indigenous writes: A guide to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit issues in Canada.](#) Portage and Main Press



## Scope of Indigenous Research

Indigenous research is any research that includes a major Indigenous component. This includes:

1. Research conducted on First Nations, Inuit, or Métis lands;
2. Projects where Indigenous identity is a criterion for research participation;
3. Research that seeks input from participants regarding Indigenous culture, heritage, artifacts, traditional knowledge or unique characteristics of Indigenous peoples;
4. Research in which Indigenous identity or membership in an Indigenous community is used as a variable for the purpose of data analysis;
5. Projects where interpretation of data results refers directly to Indigenous communities, peoples, language, history or culture; and,
6. Research that is likely to affect the welfare of Indigenous Peoples

## Indigenous Research Ethics

Indigenous peoples and communities have long been subject to historical exploitation by non-Indigenous researchers which has left a lasting legacy of mistrust of research relationships and created a barrier between the Indigenous community and the research community. Breaking this barrier requires fostering meaningful relationships through conducting research in a culturally sensitive manner. Ideally, researchers will be invited to do research, rather than offer to do research.

Below are some building foundations to achieving this.

Before starting any research with Indigenous communities, it is important to make sure your study meets the **Four Rs of Indigenous Research Ethics** (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991, "First Nations and Higher Education: The Four Rs—Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, Responsibility"; Whyte, 2013, "Indigenous Research Ethics")

1. **Respect**- includes 1) respect for Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination (read more); 2) respect for Indigenous knowledges (read more), 3) respect for appropriate control over information/knowledge (see [OCAP](#) and [resources for Indigenous data sovereignty](#)). *NB: this is not an exhaustive list*
2. **Relevance**- Is the research in any way aimed at recovering the culture and traditions of Indigenous peoples?

**Reciprocity**- What are the individual and collective benefits of your research to the peoples and community? For research with Indigenous peoples and communities, possible benefits could include 1) local hiring/training of members of the Indigenous



community as research assistants, data analysts, translators, etc.; 2) recognition of Indigenous peoples' contribution to the project (if desired by the community); 3) sharing the results of the research with the community (if desired by the community); and 4) adjusting the research design so as to better fit the particular community's needs and priorities. *NB: this is not an exhaustive list*

3. **Responsibility**- some of your responsibilities while working with Indigenous communities could include 1) early involvement (prepare a comprehensive community engagement plan); 2) integration of scientific/technical work with indigenous values; 3) commitment to cross-cultural education; and 4) balanced decision making/collaboration. *NB: this is not an exhaustive list*

Note that Indigenous communities are unique and distinct and different groups may have specific additional ethical requirements. It is recommended that you always do additional background research into the specific community ethical considerations prior to research.

## Principles/Best Practices for Respectful Research with Indigenous Communities

There have been a number of published documents pertaining to respectful research practices with Indigenous communities. Many of these documents are specific to certain Indigenous groups however, their principles overlap. See below:

- Assembly of First Nations. (n.d.) [First Nations Ethics Guide on Research and Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge](#).
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. (2018). [National Inuit Strategy on Research](#). ITK.
- Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies. (2003). [Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the North](#)
- Government of Canada. (2018). [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans, 2nd edition \(TCPS 2\)](#). "Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada."
- First Nations Information Governance Centre. (2018). [The First Nations Principles of OCAP®](#). (a set of standards that establish how First Nations data should be collected, protected, used, or shared).
- SAMHSA. (2009). [Etiquette- Do's and Don'ts](#)." CultureCard. (A resource on enacting culturally-relevant manners and protocols)



## Reconciliation through research

Reconciliation through research requires a willingness to listen and learn. There are some online resources available for free, including:

- The "[Reconciliation Through Indigenous Education.](#)" (by an Indigenous educator)
- [JKL Law's Reconciliation Action Plan](#)
- [Primer on respect in Indigenous-settler partnerships available from Reconciliation Australia](#)

NB: Reconciliation is not a solo process. It will involve being part of conversations led by Indigenous people.

## Peer reviewed Indigenous literature

Drawson, A. S., Toombs, E., & Mushquash, C. J. (2017). Indigenous research methods: A systematic review. *International Indigenous Policy Journal*, 8(2).

Hart, M. A. (2010). Indigenous worldviews, knowledge, and research: The development of an indigenous research paradigm. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*, 1(1A).

Fitzpatrick, E. F., Martiniuk, A. L., D'Antoine, H., Oscar, J., Carter, M., & Elliott, E. J. (2016). Seeking consent for research with indigenous communities: a systematic review. *BMC medical ethics*, 17(1), 1-18.

Lin, C. Y., Loyola-Sanchez, A., Boyling, E., & Barnabe, C. (2020). Community engagement approaches for Indigenous health research: recommendations based on an integrative review. *BMJ open*, 10(11), e039736.

McDonough, S. (2013). Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples by Linda Tuhiwai Smith. *Collaborative Anthropologies*, 6(1), 458-464.

Woodbury, R. B., Beans, J. A., Hiratsuka, V. Y., & Burke, W. (2019). Data management in health-related research involving indigenous communities in the United States and Canada: a scoping review. *Frontiers in genetics*, 10, 942.

Wright, A. L., Gabel, C., Ballantyne, M., Jack, S. M., & Wahoush, O. (2019). Using two-eyed seeing in research with indigenous people: an integrative review. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 18, 1609406919869695.



## Reference

Ryerson University, "Guidelines for Research Involving Indigenous People in Canada" Retrieved on November 10, 2021. Retrieved: [Guidelines for Research Involving Indigenous Peoples in Canada \(ryerson.ca\)](https://www.ryerson.ca/indigenous-research/guidelines)

Memorial University, "For researchers: Doing Indigenous research in a good way" Retrieved on November 10, 2021. Retrieved: [For researchers: Doing Indigenous research in a good way | Research | Memorial University of Newfoundland \(mun.ca\)](https://www.mun.ca/research/indigenous-research)

The University of British Columbia, "Research Methodology in Education (Lecture Notes)" Retrieved on November 10, 2021. Retrieved: [02-EDUC500-Lecture-Notes-Ethics.pdf \(ubc.ca\)](https://www.ubc.ca/02-EDUC500-Lecture-Notes-Ethics.pdf)

Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. (2014). Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada. *Tri-Council Policy Statement: ethical conduct for research involving humans.*