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Reviewing Research from a Community Perspective

This guidance document provides advice for community partners in the NWT who are asked to participate in research. Researchers in many fields are acknowledging that good research cannot draw conclusions about Indigenous people or territories without participation from the Indigenous people.

Research in the Northwest Territories requires consultation with Indigenous communities according to the research licensing process and according to federal research ethics standards.[1] In many ways, this is a positive change from the many decades of research that took knowledge from local people without returning anything or made claims that were harmful,

inaccurate, and/or incomplete. On the other hand, this also means that a greater burden of participation is placed on Indigenous communities to review research projects, make time and resources to participate in research, and provide valuable Indigenous knowledge and analysis.

Doing Good Health Research in Northern Indigenous Communities: A Guide to Research Review
Marilyn Van Bibber (Arctic Institute of Community-Based Research) and Anne George (University of British Columbia) authored this excellent resource for community members and organizations that review research:
https://nwtspor.ca/sites/default/files/2015_aicbr_doinggoodresearch2015_final_copy.pdf

Community partners who are interested in resources to help evaluate research opportunities can use this resource to build research capacity. It includes:

- Respectful research principles
- Research ethics principles that relate to research with Indigenous people and communities
- Rights of research participants
- Checklist for reviewing research
- Procedures for setting up a research review committee

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[1] TCPS Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. (2018). *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*.

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Things to Consider when Reviewing Proposed Research Partnerships

Advocating for a fair and mutually beneficial research relationship requires a good understanding of your community's and organization's priorities and experience with how research projects work. The following tips can help you assess whether a research partnership is a good fit for your community:

- Has the researcher approached you early in the research process to ensure that there's time to include local input into the proposal, study design, methods, budget, timeline, etc.?
- Does it seem like all the information is there? Has the researcher been willing to share their research question(s), methods, plans for field work and data collection, budget, etc.?
- Is it possible that this study could cause harm to people in your community? Are there other people or groups who should be involved in the study to make sure it is safe and ethical?
- Is it clear exactly what they are asking you and/or your organization to do?
- Is the research team communicating in plain language? Are they finding ways to communicate that fit your needs and work for you?
- Is the proposed research question something that your community or organization is interested in? If not, are there opportunities for the project to be expanded to include information that fits local priorities?
- Can the research team support capacity-building and development priorities within your organization in exchange for your support of the project?
- Is the partnership meaningful? Are you being included in all stages of the research and does the research team make changes based on your input?
- Is this a researcher who has worked in the community before? Do they have relationships in other communities? Do they prioritize building relationships in the communities where they work?

The Costs of Research for Partners

There can be costs for an organization that partners on research. If partnering on research is part of your organization's mandate, you may want to be prepared for these costs. If your organization does not have resources to contribute to research, you can communicate this to researchers early on to save you and the research team frustration later on.

One strategy for navigating these costs is to have a detailed discussion about what exactly the research team is requesting and decide on the degree of participation that is appropriate for your situation. Once you have identified how much you would like to participate, clarify the exact tasks and research activities you will be contributing to, including your level of responsibility – are you providing input or supporting a piece of the process, or are you accountable for deliverables and timelines? Assess the amount of time your contributions will require and how much you should be compensated.

Degree of participation
Researchers are becoming more and more aware of the importance of involving local Indigenous people in research. Researchers should offer you opportunities to participate in research that match your availability and resources. Meaningful participation in every stage of research can be time consuming and may require training and access to technology. Be sure to consider how much it will cost you to participate and discuss whether the research budget can cover these costs.

Personnel time and contributions
As a partner, are you being asked to dedicate staff time to administering funds, recruiting participants, meetings, fieldwork, or other time commitments? It is important to plan for how much time can be dedicated to the research and ask for compensation. Is the extra work something that can be included in the work of your current staff? Or would you need to hire a full or part time research coordinator? Does the researcher have graduate students who can come and work in the community? Are there tasks within your organization that they could assist with? There are many options for ensuring that the staff time required to support a research project is accounted for fairly.

Appropriate compensation

There are many great reasons to participate in research – it can contribute to the wealth of human knowledge, find solutions to shared problems, and be an opportunity for learning and new skills. Community partners and participants must be fairly compensated and provided with the resources they need, just like university researchers. Indigenous Elders have knowledge and expertise that is equivalent to a Ph.D. or other advanced degree. Community organizations have local expertise and access that the researchers need. Translators have valuable skills that make the research possible and accessible to community members. Be sure that these duties are valued adequately.

The best resource for reviewing research is the advice of an experienced community member. If you have access to a community member with research experience, ask for their opinion. You can also check out the advice from experienced community partners Lisa McDonald, Tim Heron, and Dr. John B. Zoe in the video included in the Session 5 resources.

Research Best Practices

A great deal of work has been done by Indigenous scholars and non-Indigenous allies to establish guidelines for respectful, ethical, appropriate, accurate, and decolonized research with Indigenous people and communities.

The following resources can help community partners decide their own requirements for research involving their communities:

- Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) or Self-Determination Applied to Research: A Critical Analysis of Contemporary First Nations Research and Some Options for First Nations Communities https://nwtspor.ca/sites/default/files/2005_fnc_ocapcriticalanalysis_copy.pdf
- Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, Chapter 9 *Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada* https://ethics.gc.ca/eng/tcps2-eptc2_2018_chapter9-chapitre9.html
- Communicating Research – guidance provided by the Aurora Research Institute https://nwtresearch.com/licensing/communicating-research
- Hotıì ts'eeda's resource library https://nwtspor.ca/resource-library