Unlearning Racism in Geoscience (URGE; www.urgeoscience.org) is a community-wide journal-reading and policy-design curriculum to help Geoscientists unlearn racism and improve accessibility, justice, equity, and inclusion (AJEDI) in our discipline. URGE’s primary objectives are to (1) deepen the community’s knowledge of the effects of racism on the participation and retention of black, brown, and indigenous people in Geoscience, (2) use the existing literature, expert opinion, and personal experiences to develop anti-racist policies and strategies, and (3) share, discuss, and modify anti-racist policies and strategies within a dynamic community network and on a national stage. By meeting these objectives, we hope that Geoscience departments and societies will be able to implement a well-researched crowdsourced group of anti-racist policies.

Deliverable - Policies for Working with Communities of Color

Education is essential but action is also imperative for achieving the objectives of URGE. Therefore, each topic is paired with concrete deliverables for the individual pods to develop, draft, and share. This deliverable is policies and plans for working with communities of color.

Geosciences has strong roots in colonialism, with targeted expeditions that leverage local knowledge to accumulate valuable observations to be later analyzed and disseminated at home institutions with little to no collaboration or follow up with those previous contacts. The western approach continues in present day science; it will take recognition and commitment to change. Examples in the Session 4 readings include Indigenous, Arctic, and/or other international communities, but exploitation can also occur in non-Indigenous domestic communities of color.

Building productive relationships takes time. Laying a foundation of awareness, feedback, and buy-in is a start, but true inclusion goes beyond a “seat at the table.” Approaching an issue from different perspectives, not just the western or academic standard, acknowledges that there are multiple ways of knowing. The time and effort invested upfront can lead to more meaningful and impactful results, for example considering language barriers to earthquake shaking accounts, including perspectives of Indigenous communities in climate assessments and reports, and addressing environmental racism through environmental justice.

The discussion questions below may not all be relevant or applicable to your pod, but we encourage you to think about how these can be addressed in the organizations or institutions you interact with as well as the broader geoscience field.

If you are involved in research with communities of color, in the US or abroad, have you…

- Actively sought out local collaborators / liaisons / guides? Why or why not?
  - Were they included in the early development and/or proposal of the research or project itself, or added at a later stage?
  - Were any local collaborators included as authors on presentations and/or papers?

1. Research in Cameroon, collaborated from the funding to research plan to field work and publication with professor at Univ of Buea, Cameroon
2. PhD research in NW China, logistics/planning with Chinese Han scientists and local agencies/government (ironically the oppressors of the Uigher community); collaboration included publications of US and Chinese scientists

3. GEOS course works with the Cortina Rancheria (Cortina Band of Wintun Indians, near Williams, CA) to assess water resource contamination (saline) and to find new water resources and affordable treatment methods (solar distillation, rainwater catchment, forward osmosis). Collaboration with the native community includes their guiding the research plan. Reports of results are made to the Cortina Band of Wintun Indians.

- Actively sought to include local (native?) students in your research? Why or why not?
  1. ICPMS grant includes funding for Wintun students who have been invited to participate
  2. Cameroon project included a PhD student from University of Buea
  3. China project included Chinese PhD student & post docs

- Sought to build trust and form long-term connections and collaborations with local institutions if your project is multi-year / ongoing? Why or why not?
  1. ICPMS & Wintun project is ongoing (and likely to be long term). A challenge is that the results from one Chico class to another are not easy to immediately implement for the Tribe, mainly because of cost limitations, but the hope is that the accumulation of information will result in change over time. Annual reassessments of project activities help keep research efforts useful to the Tribe and the work of students contributes to in-kind resources they use in grant funding for other projects.
  2. No continuation with Cameroon or China; not because of any negative experience, project ended, change in position, etc.

- Shared data and findings with the local/regional community in a way that is more accessible? (i.e., translating into different languages). Why or why not?
  1. ICPMS & Wintun project includes data shared with the Tribe. Broader Impacts for ICPMS funding includes free water analyses (for metals, contaminants)

- Educated yourself and your group/team about local politics, culture, customs, and knowledge, including the history of colonialism / settler colonialism in the region? Why or why not?
  1. We have recently adopted the practice of acknowledging that lands we work on (on campus and in field courses) were first inhabited by native people.
  2. Field trips to places with non-white culture (Hawai‘i)- students learn about native culture, including how cultural practices are related to geologic processes (lava flow emplacement, redirecting active flows, scientific investigations in culturally important areas (e.g. observatories on Mauna Kea); cultural awareness & sensitivity is included in field trip/fieldwork rules
3. Wintun project: students learn about the history of the Cortina Rancheria; documents they review include historical and cultural background information, which is incorporated in field experiences; no current code of conduct related to cultural sensitivity, but this is something to add.

4. Student research project for Petrology course includes recognition of native people who were displaced when a dam was constructed, State Parks Archaeologist included information about that community.

- Acknowledged local communities / Indigenous tribes in your research results?
  1. Masters students, include an acknowledgement of the local (non-native) communities that allowed access to land for research activities,
  2. Acknowledging native lands will be something important to add.

- Included local communities in your broader impacts in a meaningful way that builds on the community’s identified needs and concerns?
  - Did these efforts leverage community members, and was that work compensated appropriately?
  1. Broader Impacts for ICPMS funding includes free water analyses (for metals, contaminants) for the local community, especially those impacted by the 2018 Camp Fire, the most destructive fire in California’s history and for residents of the Cortina Rancheria.

- Considered and prioritized research questions and research locations based on needs of local communities, in addition to how impactful they are seen within academia?
  1. Yes, the instructor of the course-based Wintun project connects annually with the environmental scientist working for the Wintun EPA to determine research questions and locations based on needs of the tribe.

*Pods may have members from a range of career stages and involvement in the development and execution of research projects, and pod members may have different experiences or different perspectives when responding to these questions. Consider this in the summary document and focus on capturing responses that are representative of the range in your pod.*

Pods should upload a summary document of previous interactions with communities of color as well as plans for an improved process to the URGE website by 3/19/2021. We also encourage pods to post on their organization’s website, and share over social media (#URGEoscience and @URGEoscience). Sharing deliverables will propagate ideas, foster discussion, and ensure accountability.