URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for McGill University Earth & Planetary Sciences Pod

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This is what was found by the Earth & Planetary Sciences Pod at McGill University on Policies for Working with Communities of Color, as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources.

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.

- Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:
  - E.g. How many research projects were undertaken in countries or regions with communities of color, how many of those included meaningful interactions with those communities of color? Briefly describe one or more example projects to provide context for the following questions.
  - McGill EPS field trips and research projects are regularly undertaken in either international locations with communities of color or regions in Canada and the U.S.A., but few have meaningful interactions with local communities.
    - EPS field research in remote locations on Vancouver Island, Yukon, and northern Quebec take place on indigenous lands
    - EPS field research in international locations (e.g., USA, Namibia, China)
    - Mining-focused undergraduate field trips led by Prof. Williams-Jones to Morocco, Tanzania, Guatemala, Chile, and other locations
  - Example: a structural geology project included multiple field campaigns in China
    - Collaboration included Co-PIs on grants, working together closely to develop project and scope
    - translation and field assistance from graduate and undergraduate students from both the USA and China
    - working with local tourism companies for organizing and running 6+ weeks of field season
What worked well in these interactions?
- E.g. Using local names for landmarks or features, adhering to restrictions and customs such as not scheduling outreach meetings/events during hunting season
- Close collaboration allows for valuable practical assistance, including knowledge of how to coordinate with local governments, translation assistance, negotiation experience, field knowledge, and networking within the country.
- For a structural geology project in China, there was an established agreement between PIs in China and US for ~year-long student exchanges and coauthorships among all participating parties. Strong working relationships that were formed 10+ years ago continue.
- EPS fieldwork in Namibia: existing alliance with the local geologist from the Namibia survey and the University of Namibia has helped ease acquiring geological data, land access, research visas and permits to do fieldwork in Namibia.

What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?
- E.g., We did not include priorities of local communities of color when developing our proposal, and to address this in the future we will include community member(s) in the early stages of proposal planning and writing as collaborators
- One of the primary issues of working in foreign countries involves language barriers and the resultant miscommunications. Not knowing the language resulted in occasional friction or miscommunication among groups during extensive field campaigns. This could result in serious misunderstandings, including a lack of clarity on appropriate payment to field assistants, restrictions on working in politically sensitive areas, and lack of clarity on government permissions for working in the regions. In the future, an effort to learn the local language should be a goal to allow for easier and less stressful communication.

Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?
- E.g., Work with and compensate community members to translate research results and outreach materials into local language, include acknowledgements in forthcoming publications and presentations
- Discussing research project plans during the early phases and continuously engaging with the communities on research developments
  - Attend local conferences (e.g., SACNAS) to disseminate your results to the community
  - Making research results available to the local community (i.e., seismic hazard)
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- Acknowledge contributions of the community or individual members from the community in future products
  - Ensure inclusive authorship lists for publications arising from ongoing and future projects
  - Include land acknowledgements for work conducted on indigenous lands in future papers and presentations
- A working knowledge of the local language.
- Prior research on the collaborative history of individuals and the political history of the field site would assist in understanding occasionally delicate jurisdictional issues.

- Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?
  - *E.g.*, Additional support/funding for early planning process of projects to include forming productive and mutually beneficial connections with communities, establish a point of contact for interfacing with communities so as not to overwhelm with individual requests from researchers and collaborators
  - University-level ethics guidelines for conducting field work on indigenous lands and international field work could provide a template for necessary considerations from the beginning of the project (i.e., involving the community from the development of the project to educating the team on histories and culture), including budget recommendations
  - Newly-formed EPS Field Safety Committee will be developing “best practices” guides and planning workshops for field safety, which will include issues around diversity (mostly for field safety for researchers). We will also transmit some outcomes from this deliverable (addressing community relations/respectful and bilateral engagement) to that committee to form part of the field preparation workshops.
  - Resources McGill has for interfacing with indigenous communities:
    - *A list of Indigenous Research Centers affiliated with McGill*
    - McGill is in the process of developing a cultural protocol document. There is a link available to other similar documents in Canada [here](#).
    - *Allyship Tools*: A brief collation from McGill concerning better allyship with indigenous groups
  - Resources for writing land acknowledgements and their limitations
    - *Bryn Mawr resources for geology and colonialism*
    - *Who’s land?*: Performative Practice and the Analytics of Territory