

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for University/Organization - Deliverable

These are the findings of EOAS-UBC at the University of British Columbia on Policies for Working with Communities of Color as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources.

- **Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:**

- **Survey to URGE-EOAS Pod members on Working with Communities of Color**

- **Goal:** To learn about Pod members' previous and current research interactions with communities of color (primarily Indigenous Canadian communities). To gain a sense of types and methods of engagement and outreach. To understand what worked well and what can be done better.

- **Number of participants:** 6

- **Summary of Findings:**

- The survey is obviously sampling a very small population compared to the population of the Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences department of UBC. And responses represent only researchers' perspectives and not the perspectives of those in the communities affected. Still, some valuable and interesting information was extracted.

- ***The key findings were:***

- **For majority of responders policies and guidelines for working with/within Indigenous communities were not sought, difficult to find, or not provided by project leaders**
 - **Local collaborators/liaisons/guides/students were included in some projects, and their participation was determined to be beneficial to the project**
 - **For majority of responders, not enough time was planned for community engagement or collaboration**
 - **For majority of responders, local communities were acknowledged in the research results**



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- **For a couple of responders, no action was taken on education of the research team about the communities where research was being conducted**
- **For a couple of responders there was no engagement, as there was no support, incentive or education to do so**
- **Research was generally not planned around the broader needs and interests of the communities**
- **What worked well: meetings with communities, data/sample/map demonstrations, hiring local, being accountable, being transparent, listening**
- **What can be done better: communicate and contact earlier, more time and funding budgeted for engagement, spending time in communities, education of researchers, outreach, inclusion of people from the community**

A department-wide survey would provide much more clarity around research being done in the department within and with Indigenous communities and such a survey is apparently being planned by the Department Head.

Missing here is feedback on working with/within other communities of color, aside from Canadian Indigenous communities. There is research being conducted within EOAS-UBC that involves working and living within local communities around the globe. This experience is not represented in this survey, but certainly sensitivity, respect, inclusion, engagement should all still apply, and resources made available to guide researchers in interaction.

Please find full survey results in [Appendix 1](#) at the end of this document.

• **What worked well in these interactions?**

Actions that made for successful interactions and engagement with Indigenous communities are noted in the survey summary above.

It should be noted that those who responded to the survey are not members of the communities where research was conducted, thus what might be deemed successful (or unsuccessful) is primarily from the perspective of the surveyed researchers.



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- **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**

Lack of action in engagement, and things that did not work well, or could be done better, are also summarized above from the survey results. Things that could be done better deserve clear prioritization and action. The survey identified several areas for improvement and some actions are suggested here:

- **education of researchers** - this is a major problem. Clear policy/framework is needed to support and guide researchers working with communities of colour in general and specific to indigenous communities. This might help solve many of the other failures. In addition to playing a leadership role in educating its researchers and staff, the Department of Earth, Ocean and Atmospheric Sciences should develop or source supplemental guidelines that address geoscience-specific issues. Currently a plan is evolving to develop a department committee focused on Indigenous education and engagement.
- **communicate and contact earlier** - need to contact early, communicate ideas, identify priorities of community.
- **more time and funding budgeted for engagement** - even those projects that have prioritized engagement found there was not enough time or funding to see it through optimally.
- **spending time in communities** - this can be costly, but funding should be budgeted accordingly.
- **outreach** - requirements should be in place to report findings and research to any community affected/involved in a way most useful to the community members (in their language, with interpreter, visual media, examples of work, community meetings at times and places chosen by community members). Also required is a mechanism for communities to provide feedback.
- **inclusion of people from the community** - hiring community members is beneficial to all parties, but also learning from community members - identify best ways of involvement and sharing information, hearing and prioritizing community needs. Budget funds to compensate any hiring (whether guides, collaborators, translators, students)



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UBC's [Indigenous Strategic Plan](#), launched in September 2020, commits to action in many of these areas. The plan uses a [performance measurement framework](#) and annual work plans to better ensure meaningful progress towards its goals. Commitments include:

- developing Indigenous-focused committees, advisories and leadership roles across the University (Action 1)
 - funding for goals identified in the plan (Action 3)
 - support for senior administrators and faculty (Action 4)
 - research protocols and community-specific ethical research guidelines co-developed with interested community partners, including the imperative of free, prior and informed consent and protocols on the ownership, control, access and possession of Indigenous data. (Action 13),
 - compensation of indigenous research partners (Action 14),
 - integration of indigenous histories and issues into all programs (Action 16),
 - development of a research information repository and communication portal that assists students, faculty, staff, communities and researchers at large to access resources, information, publications and reports about Indigenous issues and knowledge (Action 31),
 - mandatory Indigenous history and issues training for all faculty and staff (Action 34), and,
 - creation of easily accessible structures and mechanisms for Indigenous communities to partner with the University on initiatives that advance their unique goals and interests (Action 36).
- **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**

Most of the items presented above, aside from early planning and budgeting for engagement, could still apply to ongoing projects whose leaders wish to engage communities of color within which they are working:

- training and education of research team
- hiring local if some work/tasks/research is outstanding
- present layout summaries of research conducted (present or past) with papers or theses.
- share data collected in a clear, simple way
- offer to come visit, invite community members or set up talks/discussion to members or students to talk about the research
- invite community members to present or have a discussion on their knowledge/views



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- if papers/theses, etc, are not published yet, reach out to find out if there is an Indigenous or local name of geographical features and change or add that name to maps/discussions. Keep in mind that there may be many names for the same features
 - seek additional flexibility regarding which may be impacted by this integration.
 - seek additional funding for that engagement (UBC/department/project levels?)
 - acknowledge the communities in the research result
- **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?**

When researching this deliverable we found that many excellent resources existed at UBC and beyond but were not known or well communicated to researchers. A non-comprehensive list of these resources is included as [Appendix 2](#). For researchers at UBC, the [Indigenous Research Support Initiative](#) is a particularly valuable resource.

- **Identify and inventory existing resources.** To avoid duplicating work and creating competing protocols, work needs to be done to identify and inventory existing resources and policies. The group also acknowledged that 'we don't know what we don't know' and internally-produced guidelines and identified needs would be skewed to the demographic and perspectives of our Department. Research into existing resources will help identify issues and priorities from a broader perspective.
 - The [Toolbox of Research Principles in an Aboriginal Context: ethics, respect, fairness, reciprocity, collaboration and culture](#), produced by the Commission de la santé et des services sociaux des Premières Nations du Québec et du Labrador (CSSSPNQL) may serve as a valuable starting point. It is a regularly updated compilation of existing protocols and initiatives, open data, issues of research ethics, and existing and emerging initiatives.
- **Communication of existing resources.** Fear of getting things wrong and uncertainty over where to start were identified by the group as two deterrents to self-education. Initiative needs to be taken by the department to direct EOAS researchers to the most useful and relevant resources.
 - While targeted communications are useful, it's important that this information is easily accessible and discoverable on-demand, ideally through the EOAS website. Ongoing reminders could also be included in EOAS weekly newsletters. Recurring workshops would also be appropriate.



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- **Some guidelines specific to geosciences need to be developed or sourced.** Both generalized guidelines about respect, communication, inclusion required for working in any community of color, or country or culture, that is not our own, and for working in Indigenous communities (common if working in remote, or not remote, BC or Canada)
 - Many of those working in 'hard rock' geology (understanding ancient geologic processes) or resource exploration and development might follow guidelines that focus on land access, permissions, etc, but would benefit from enhanced communication and engagement with communities. Some resources are available to guide this type of work (e.g. [Association of Mineral Exploration BC \(AMEBC\) Indigenous Engagement Guidebook](#)).
- **Training and education is critical.** Researchers are often unaware of the necessity to acknowledge and engage with communities impacted by their research. As previously mentioned, this is acknowledged in UBC's Indigenous Strategic Plan (Actions 16 and 34).
 - First order checklists provided by department (e.g. - research your communities, contact your communities, consider impacts on your communities, plan time and funding to engage your communities) would be a valuable resource for EOAS geoscientists and encourage practical change. Currently, no clear expectations of EOAS researchers seem to exist in this area.
- **Institution-level policies** requiring that government organizations and companies sponsoring projects (as there often are) have engagement and community-led data ownership policies in place when a project involves communities of colour may help spur change.
- **Funding and time are both required.** Proper engagement takes time and careful pre-planning. Advocating that large funders at the institutional and national level start providing the financial resources necessary so that geoscientists can spend the time engaging and planning would help researchers access these resources.
 - This area in particular seems to fundamentally conflict with 'business as usual' within academic research today. Time and funding to engage with communities and develop community-led research is much less accessible to early-career academics than their mid- and late-career colleagues. Consequently, these skills are underdeveloped as researchers mature in their careers and such issues are unlikely to register as a priority to those building research projects.



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Appendix 1. Survey Responses

Survey Responses (respondents = 6)

If your work or research involved working with/within communities of color, prior to work did you seek out policies to guide communication, interaction, outreach, and engagement with these communities?

yes	2
no	4

Were you successful in locating relevant policies and guidance for working with/within communities of color?

yes	1
no	5

Which policy and guideline resources did you use? For example, guides published by government, university or community sources. Please be specific if possible.

Guides published by government and community sources.

Did you actively seek out local collaborators/liaisons/guides in these communities?

yes	4
no	2

Why or why not?

- "We had First Nation representatives because that was what the Nations wished while field work was conducted on their land"
- "For transportation and local knowledge."
- "Didn't think of it"
- "I was not the person seeking and forming local liaisons... some of the local people were hired officially as camp hands and wildlife monitors so there must be some sort of policy in place... Anyway, one of the PIs on this particular project had been doing fieldwork in the area for decades and had formed close collaborations and trusting relationships with the local communities. Not only does this make sense given the fact that we were camped on their lands, but also it makes sense for information exchange - they know the land better than anyone."
- "My research project involves a group that has included indigenous First Nation groups as stakeholders, and I am in process of securing my own liaison."

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Were local collaborators included in the early development and/or proposal of the research or project itself, or added at a later stage?

early 2

later 4

Did you actively seek to include local students in your research?

yes 2

no 4

Why or why not?

- “we proposed having a talk/discussion with the local school but timing didn't work.”
- “Too early stage but intend to hire local students in the future.”
- “Didn't think of it”
- The PIs set up a program where the top 2 students had the opportunity to do field traverses with the geologists over the course of the summer. It was an awesome experience for everyone.”

Did you seek to build trust and form long-term connections and collaborations with local institutions if your project is multi-year/ongoing?

yes 4

no 2

Why or why not?

- “This is still ongoing and can be built open and enhanced more. The reason is because that is the right thing to do, the area (that field work is on) is within the First Nations land and there might be future work with the lab.”
- “Beneficial for providing local knowledge and building trust.”
- “Didn't think of it”
- It's mutually beneficial and demonstrates respect for the people who live there... I'm still in touch with a couple of the high school students who decided to go to university after their summer field work experiences.”

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Were previous negative interactions, whether from inside or outside of your organization, addressed in the plans for building these connections and trust?

yes	3
no	3

What previous negative interactions were addressed?

- “Historic negative interactions between industry (not UBC) and the communities.”
- “I can only assume that they were addressed before going back for another field season.”

Were there no previous negative interactions known, or were previous negative interactions not addressed?

- They were not addressed
- None known.

Have you shared data and findings with the local/regional community in a way that is more accessible? (i.e., translating into different languages).

yes	2
no	4

Why or why not?

- “We shared results and data and did a lay summary/overview in plain English. We have not translated into different languages.”
- “Some proposal were translated but so far the results have not because it is expensive. We intend to share finding in public meetings.”
- “Didn’t think of it”
- “The PI sends resource to Ulukhaktok fairly regularly I think, especially when the maps were being published. In particular, he helped the community find a larger resource of soap stone (carving stone) while we were there physically and then also made sure to include that resource on the maps he sent back.”
- “Not yet at that stage”

Have you educated yourself and your group/team about local politics, culture, customs, and knowledge, including the history of colonialism/settler colonialism in the region?

yes	3
no	3

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Why or why not?

- “Because that is an important part of both field work and travelling to new places. Now (many of the same and new members in the group) are taking a course on Indigenous history and rights and looking for ones that are specific to our region.”
- “Didn't think of it”
- “We were not educated about the local anything. Which is insane, when you think about it. Especially seeing as our group included people from places overseas that do not have indigenous populations anymore (eg UK).”
- “In process”

Was sufficient time allocated to the process of working within the community's governance, customs, and priorities?

yes	2
no	4

Have you acknowledged local communities/Indigenous tribes in your research results?

yes	4
no	2

Did you include local communities in your broader impacts in a meaningful way that builds on the community's identified needs and concerns?

yes	2
no	4

Did these efforts leverage community members, and was that work compensated appropriately?

yes	3
no	1
The project(s) leveraged community members, however, their work was not compensated appropriately.	2

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Did you consider and prioritize research questions and research locations based on needs of local communities, in addition to how impactful they are seen within academia?

yes	1
no	5

What strategies and policies worked well to facilitate interaction and communication with, and involvement of local communities?

- “Meeting with the chiefs and a special meeting with Keyoh family stakeholders. Having a map printed out and similar samples to show.”
- “Interaction and communication with local governments and community groups worked well, also hiring local guides.”
- “Communication is often difficult with remote communities. I think what works well is basically keeping your word: if you say you'll hire, hire. If you say you'll include students, follow through with that. Listen first and foremost.”

What might have been done differently, or better, to include input from, and to engage local communities?

- “Contact and communicate (pre-fieldwork) earlier than we did.”
- “More time in the communities would have been beneficial but it costs money.”
- “Education on territories worked within, outreach, hiring of local guides or students”
- “I'm not sure because I wasn't the one directly communicating with them, but I have to say that I remember being truly inspired by this PI and the importance they placed on including the local community in every aspect of our summers working near their community. And this was a decade ago. In a sense though, it doesn't make sense not to include communities in your work in super remote areas - having their help and trust could mean the difference between life and death.”

What is your role at UBC?

Graduate student	Lecturer	Faculty	Post Doc/Research Associate
2	1	1	2



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Appendix 2. Non-comprehensive resource list

UBC resources

- [UBC: Indigenous Strategic Plan](#)
- [UBC: Indigenous Peoples Language Guideline](#)
- [UBC: Protocol for working with Musqueam communities](#)
- [UBC: Indigenous Research Support Initiative](#): Offers professional support and services for Indigenous research collaborations across both UBC campuses, along with resources and toolkits for researchers
- [UBC: Connecting communities: Principles for Musqueam-UBC Collaboration](#)
- [UBC: Indigenous Research Methodologies research guides](#): Comprehensive, practical guides on many subjects, including research ethics and indigenous cultural and intellectual property.

External resources

- [CSSSPNQL: Toolbox of Research Principles in an Aboriginal Context: ethics, respect, fairness, reciprocity, collaboration and culture](#): Regularly updated compilation of: existing protocols, initiatives and relevant open data organized by location; issues of research ethics; and, existing and emerging initiatives.
- [Indigenous Foundation website](#): 'an information resource on key topics relating to the histories, politics, and cultures of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada'
- [Musqueam nation website](#)
- [Reciprocal Research Network](#): 'an online tool to facilitate reciprocal and collaborative research about cultural heritage from the Northwest Coast of British Columbia.'
- [Kitasoo/Xai'xais: Informing First Nations Stewardship with Applied Research guide](#): '*Informing First Nations Stewardship with Applied Research – Key questions to inform an equitably beneficial and engaged research process* is a guide created to support researchers at all career stages and First Nation stewardship staff alike to engage in an equitably beneficial research process in support of conservation and stewardship initiatives.'
- [Montreal Urban Aboriginal Community Strategy Network: Indigenous Ally Toolkit \(accessed via UBC Physiotherapy\)](#)
- [National Indigenous Research and Knowledges Network \(2012-2019\)](#)
- [University of Alberta: Courses on colonialism](#)
- [AMEBC: Indigenous Engagement Guidebook \(Sept 2020\)](#)