URGE
Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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

This is what was found by ESRC/OPAL at University of New Hampshire 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:**

  Our organization has had many research and educational interactions with communities of color. However, the notes described below are exclusive to our Urge pod. Of the ten pod members, there has been several direct experiences working in communities of color including:

  1. Mississippi with the U. of Southern Miss/Department of Marine Science with no interaction with communities of color.
  2. The UNH Sidore Series, started in 2020, with the initiative to develop relationships with local Indigenous communities in New England and the Arctic to consider how Indigenous knowledge and cultural heritage can deepen our thinking about sustainable futures. We developed this series in consultation with the Indigenous New Hampshire Collaborative Collective. In addition to local Native American speakers, we are bringing in Arctic storytellers and cultural leaders to provide our academic community with a better understanding of how sustainable futures in the North connect with our own experiences in New England.
  3. NSF ISE program (now AISL), focused on engaging rural and Indigenous youth in learning about their local environment through field data collection, mapping, and storytelling.
  4. A project in collaboration with a sister institution focused on integrating stakeholder experience and values in assessing uncertainties for future resource needs. We engaged directly with members of a local Indigenous community in the process and considered tribal sovereignty in our research.

- **What worked well in these interactions?**
  - Of the ten pod members *7 of 10* had no professional interaction with communities of color.
  - The effort to include indigenous voices is a long-term process in order to build trust that has been broken nationally in previous years by non-native researchers and Arctic and native communities. The Sidore series is focused on building trust through established indigenous councils and organizations before research in local communities and this is an ongoing effort.
  - Listening to and learning from my colleagues who lived in the community, using local names, speaking simply and clearly, without too much scientific jargon, identifying key organizations and community members who could share information and knowledge and serve as "nodes" to interact [indirectly] with larger numbers of people, producing simple, clear graphics that showcase findings with minimal translation required, asking community members what was of interest or useful to them as a scientific outcome, and using that to motivate the scientific questions asked.
  - Our sister institution, primarily focused on stakeholder engagement, sought the perspectives of our Indigenous stakeholders through separate meetings where their perspectives were ensured to be respected.

- **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**
  - Of the ten pod members:
  - Local communities of color and their priorities were not included in the proposal. Should be addressed in the future, e.g., outreach activities with K-12, include BIPOC faculty members as collaborators.
  - The Sidore series is an ongoing effort and learning process
  - Not including local community members officially in our research because it was outside of the funding scope; future efforts would be improved by finding shared objectives that can be supported across countries
  - Language barriers – Greenlandic and Danish are both particularly challenging languages, with few resources available to study the former. This language barrier has led to a lack of communication of the research findings to the communities where the research is located.
  - Not proving mentorship that includes BIPOC voices and perspectives.

- Lack of appreciation for how long-standing mistrust (based on current and historical trauma) on the part of Indigenous communities and their representatives would interfere with collaboration.
- Researchers involved in projects within the community in the past have not always been dedicated to building long-term relationships with community members or have not shared research results. This can lead to mistrust in new researchers if time is not spent developing long-term and meaningful relationships with community leaders.
- In the context of stakeholder groups, managing the interpersonal tensions without clearly defined expectations was intractable. We needed greater trust between the researchers and our Indigenous stakeholders so they could have greater confidence that conflict resolution between stakeholders would have been equitable.
- Timing of collaborations is important, bringing in stakeholders as early as possible into a project is key.

- **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**
  - Of the ten pod members:
  - It is not possible in the case to improve projects already taken but hoping to learn how to improve outcomes for future projects.
  - It is important to remove jargon and complicated language from results, and translate simple descriptions of the outcomes and formally acknowledge contributions
  - Involve local communities in not only data collection, but data analysis, report writing, and publications.
  - Engage Indigenous communities from the outset of the projects, or even before, in the planning stage. Focus on building relationships without being too tied the need to "make progress" on grants and papers. Be willing to take the time to go through culturally appropriate training.
  - Critically review research findings, including how future projections and environmental adaptations differentially affect communities of color based on geography.

- **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?**

  o Include additional funding in future proposals to support a close collaborations and cross-cultural collaborations with e.g. local schools in communities with color (i.e., establish a local point of contact) seems reasonable and within the overall goals of federal funding agencies. This financial support should include funding for early career researchers in order to provide meaningful interactions not just lip service.
  o Better, more flexible mechanisms for tracking, documenting, and showcasing community contributions to research. Many newer resources exist for honoring the "unsung" work that goes into publications (whether that is by non-academics who don't need publication points or technicians or community members), but these types of recognition are still very "Western" and do not necessarily provide benefit for all contributors.
  o Respect from academic researchers for different ways of knowing and being – maybe some training for how to excel and be mindful outside your personal comfort zone and while connecting across cultures.
  o If Arctic, the NNA office at University of Alaska Fairbanks has a new project for engagement with Arctic communities, including trainings. Collaborate with already existing organizations that help bridge collaborations with Indigenous peoples
  o Include funding to hire professional facilitators / communication experts to help with managing tone and expectations.
  o Focus greater attention on tone-setting in workshops, and clearly address with the individuals that violate the mission of the group.