



# URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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## URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for INSTAAR, CU Boulder

This is what was found by the GooseBarn Pod at University of Colorado/INSTAAR 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. A) How many research projects were undertaken in countries or regions with communities of color, B) how many of those included meaningful interactions with those communities of color? C) Briefly describe one or more example projects to provide context for the following questions.*
  - These data are not routinely collected by our institute. We sent a poll to all members of our research institute (INSTAAR) to see if our community members could expand on this question and provide examples and feedback to include in this document. We received a few responses from the group. It is clear that this is an area that needs much more work and investment.
  - Gooseff lab work at Toolik Field Station on the North Slope of Alaska, done without local community interactions. This is an area where we would like to make changes in the future.
  - Barnard Lab work at the Agua Salud Project sites in Panama: interactions with locals were limited to those hired as day laborers, or those employed by the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama City. Interactions did occur with local ranchers who were rotating cattle at one of our field sites, but these were extremely limited, and did not ultimately result in further inclusion of locals on the research projects.
  - INSTAAR Poll results:
  - A) 2, B) 1, C) We studied biogeochemical processes in the Okavango Delta and worked with scientists and community members in Maun, Botswana
  - (A) 2 (B) 1 (C) An NSF-funded interdisciplinary and collaborative social and physical sciences team is using co-production to assess how fish and river ice transportation and Indigenous communities in Alaska and western Canada will be impacted by climate change. This work includes an Indigenous Observing Network. Two internships to college-track Indigenous (U.S.) high school students with the USGS, after which USGS will cover college tuition expenses. 42 scholarships for Indigenous community members to attend an Indigenous-planned and -hosted Summit meeting



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on the future of Arctic Rivers and community climate adaptation and planning. The bedrock of our co-production framework is an Indigenous Advisory Council that includes 11 members who are Indigenous leaders and/or regional representatives. These paid project consultants ensure accountability and the protection of Indigenous knowledge.

- **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*
- Okavango Delta- Following local approaches and procedures.
- Working with an inter-tribal council to identify research needs from project conception.
- Compensating Indigenous advisors for their time.
- Listening and allowing sufficiently long silences to ensure speakers are finished. Remembering that silence can be a traditional form to express dissent.
- Working to include men and women (recalling that women are much more likely to be involved in community affairs than men, and working hard to recruit men to strike a just balance), youth and elders.
- Avoiding acronyms and jargon (on all sides of discussion: Indigenous and western scientists).
- Forming an Indigenous-designed charter and guidelines for co-production and Indigenous Knowledge protection.
- Planning and designing a cultural competency training, informed by our Council, to train investigators on proper protocols of working with Indigenous communities.

- **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*
- Agua Salud: local accounts of stream levels and/or water availability in prior years could have served to enrich our long term data set, as the overarching goal for this research was to determine the controls on freshwater availability within the Panama Canal region.
- Okavango Delta: Follow up opportunities were limited because of transitions in leadership at the research site and limited internet connectivity at the site.
- Ensuring that conversations with educationally diverse Indigenous council members (some with PhDs others with 7th grade educations) were inclusive of all involved.

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Meeting facilitation that promoted open-discussion proved to be extremely difficult. Some members stopped contributing when they felt excluded by the subject topic or technical depth of the discussion. This has been improved by using anonymous survey questions interspersed throughout the discussions to give facilitators a sense of how to redirect.

- **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*
  - Continue listening to the guidance of Indigenous peoples. Strengthen community outreach efforts. Hire indigenous students through CU Boulder even if they chose to remain in their community. Explore ways to provide improved wifi options for Indigenous Advisory Council members.
- **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*
  - Formalized training for graduate students (and other researchers) that delves into the complexity of engaging with communities and decolonizing our research.
  - Small grants to fund meetings with communities and mechanisms to PAY communities for their time
  - Widely available (NSF, NIH) pilot grants of \$20k to \$50k to prospective investigator teams to support collaborative and outreach exploration with communities of color.
- **Additional resources that might be helpful as we develop organizational policies for working with BIPOC communities.**

**Policies of governments:**

  - <https://en.unesco.org/indigenous-peoples/policy>
  - <https://www.nsf.gov/geo/opp/arctic/conduct.jsp>
  - <https://www.csiro.au/en/research/indigenous-science/Indigenous-knowledge/Our-Knowledge-Our-Way/OKOW-resources>
  - <https://www.woodwellclimate.org/developing-best-practices-for-working-in-arctic-communities/>



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- <https://www.arcus.org/resources/northern-communities> (this is a compilation of a lot of resources)