

URGE

Unlearning Racism in Geoscience



URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for Montana State University

This is what was found by the Department of Earth Sciences at Montana State 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.

Person 1:

I have been working with Indigenous scholars and communities for numerous years and as a part of these collaborations Indigenous collaborators, tribal nations, communities, elders have all played integral roles in the research planning, design, implementation and interpretation and reporting on and publishing of results to scientific, management and public audiences. I have advised and mentored a number of Indigenous undergraduate and graduate students as part of this research. Taking time to build trust over several years was critical for developing these collaborations.

I would like to continue to expand on these collaborations and advise more Indigenous students which requires support - SLOAN program provides a good model but there needs to be more programs like this and/or support.

Person 2:

Participating in [a diversity training course] was useful for getting me into the topics and conversations. I am attempting to create labs or activities in each of my classes that teach some aspect of challenges or history associated with indigenous communities. I also am putting a disclaimer in my syllabus that these activities were developed from a western perspective and that I am still learning myself. I have become more aware through education of how indigenous voices have been removed from our western history and am working to share this new knowledge with those students around me

I have been struggling to build connections in meaningful ways. Largely based on fear of doing it wrong and not knowing how to start. I am hoping to spend the next few years slowly getting to know more people in the indigenous communities in [state] rather than trying to start a project with them. Other intentions are to attend conferences that are specifically focused on underrepresented groups to get to know more of these researchers. I think a goal would be to reach beyond working with communities of colors as a broader impact.



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Person 3:

Much of my work is international. It is very important to me to collaborate with local scientists. I co-author with them and we alternate first authorship. These collaborators have also been able to facilitate the involvement of their students on our projects. They are also included on publications as authors. Some of them are now seeking PhD opportunities. I have also been engaged in building education programs in local schools in my host country. Some of this work is part of our broader impacts.

I plan to continue to engage local collaborators and to work on local outreach in the host countries of my research. I have also been engaged with indigenous education here at MSU.

Person 4:

Truthfully, I have done very little of the five prompts.

The primary barrier to these activities is lack of time and knowledge.

Person 5:

Yes, there is a field site on tribal land I would like to work. Not sure how to go about doing this.

Person 6:

1. I worked with a student from [local tribe] who wanted to examine TEK for water on [their reservation]; the person worked with tribal members to design the research approach; the person followed up with a final presentation to the tribal council on her findings. (To do better next time: I only traveled to [\[the community\]](#) with my student once; next time, I would commit more time in the early stages to traveling with my student to meet people my student has worked with over several years and worked with on this student's project)

2. I recently added a "land acknowledgement" in the acknowledgements section of a paper to acknowledge that research was conducted on historically indigenous land. The project did not involve tribal land or tribes, but was conducted on land that historically was used by various tribes [to do better next time: do land acknowledgements do anything? Is there a more impactful way to acknowledge the history of the land we live and work on?]

3. I co-developed a proposal with a [local tribe] tribal leader; I had previously submitted a very different version of this proposal; I first drove up to [local tribe] to meet him in person; I emphasized that I was happy to re-write the proposal from scratch - but also showed him the previous version as a starting point. He emphasized it was important to start from scratch - but it was helpful to have a starting point to begin the discussion [to do better next time: while I gave myself 9 months to co-develop the proposal, the letter of collaboration was still very last minute;



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also I didn't reach out to anyone beyond the one person; on one hand I was looking to this one person to tell me who else to reach out to; on the other hand, reaching out to only 1 person isn't enough)

In my previous research in [International place], I don't feel like I "gave back" enough. I did follow-up with interviewees with my results. I also helped fund and organize an applied workshop in 1 of the communities I worked in. But it definitely did not feel like it was a fair exchange of information.

Person 7:

As part of a large grant where we evaluated [a federal agency's] portfolio of grant funding, we conducted focus groups at three minority serving institutions to understand differences in capacity, successes, and challenges, as well as how partnerships with primarily white institutions did or did not work. This was very much a top down project in that we did not involve the MSIs in research design, we just asked if we could visit with them. We learned a lot about how to better integrate MSIs in grants from the beginning, and what successful partnerships between MSIs and PWIs look like.

As part of this project, we also asked PWIs about their work with MSIs, thus we had the PWI outlook as well.

We also conducted several case studies on projects that worked with tribal communities. Again, this was a top down approach (our own research design), but we gathered important qualitative data and have some excellent examples of good collaborations with tribal communities.

The other part of this project was that we hired two BIPOC students to conduct interviews with PIs from MSIs and have a report specific to the MSI perspective on [federal agency] funding. The students had to ask some of the questions we needed to ask due to the grant, but were able to also ask their own questions. Again, this was researcher-driven, but hopefully less intrusive than a bunch of white people going to ask questions of BIPOC experiences.

One of my current projects [on project topic] the team decided not to engage with Tribes, because we did not think we had enough time to do it justice. We would prefer to begin a relationship and build a project the communities need.

On another project, we surveyed [topic area] experts. It was very difficult to get contacts with [US-based] tribes. We did end up getting some responses from tribes, but I am sure it is not representative.

I am torn about working with Indigenous communities -- if the right relationship with interests



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that align were to come up, I would totally do it. But at this point, I am not actively seeking these types of projects. It feels wrong though to do surveys or interviews about [state] [topic] issues and not get Indigenous perspectives.

Person 8:

Yes - I worked on two projects in Indigenous communities. The first one worked with the [international location]. I learned to listen and be patient. They were keen to hear my perspectives once they opened the conversation, but not until they asked. This project had already started by the time i was part of the team.

The second was within [International Location]. I initiated this project.

The most important lesson is that you need to have an advocate from within the community, or else you will have zero traction. Stay in close contact with that advocate throughout.

I intend to continue my work in these communities, but for now my work will be focused in [state]. Right now it is about time.

Person 9:

I am definitely always looking to include minority/non-western perspectives in my teaching. Research is more tricky. Ideally, I would like to support graduate students pursuing research in such communities in a non-extractive manner. Persons mentorship of Person II's research is an exemplary model in my eyes.

There are always missed opportunities. I wish I had incorporated a more robust indigenous perspectives into my dissertation research. Time, resources, lack of connections, and fear of being a further colonizing force certainly were barriers.