

## **Deliverable#4 - Policies for Working with Communities of Color**

### **POD: Memorial University of Newfoundland:**

This deliverable includes two areas of geoscience research conducted in Canada that potentially impact communities of color. The first is the geoscientists conducting research and mineral exploration activities in Yukon Territory and the second is environmental and geoscience research conducted in Newfoundland and Labrador by individuals from Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) and their colleagues.

The Yukon Geological Survey (YGS) is a branch of the Energy, Mines and Resources (EMR) department within the Government of Yukon. YGS geologists' primary roles are to carry out regional bedrock and surficial mapping of the Yukon Territory and continually update a geologic map of the territory. Recently, the YGS has started doing hazard assessments of communities and started research on geothermal potential in different areas of the Territory. Generally, before field work is carried out, there are First Nations consultations that involve describing the nature of fieldwork and the anticipated footprint of our work. We commonly seek out local First Nations when we are looking for field assistants (this is not totally what happens but it's what we talk about doing) and expeditors for our work.

There is a lot of environmental and geoscience research conducted on the lands of Newfoundland and Labrador – land home to the Inuit of Nunatsiavut (northern coast of Labrador, Innu Nation of Nitassinan (Labrador and Quebec), Inuit of NunatuKavut (south coast of Labrador), and the Miawpukek Mi'kmaq First Nation (southern central Newfoundland). Though currently home to diverse groups of indigenous people we must also acknowledge and respect the histories and cultures of the Beothuk along with the Mi'kmaq, Innu and Inuit. The research conducted here spans a wide array from natural resource based, climate change and ecological research. There is a growing awareness of the lack of awareness, respect, communication and understanding of indigenous communities, their knowledge and experiences (both of research practices and the environment). This likely has stemmed from a combination of the growing literature describing the need for unlearning bad research practices and the value in indigenous knowledge as well as some institutional pressures. Another significant source of this awareness is the self governance and sovereignty of indigenous communities in this region. For example, on December 1, 2005 the Nunatsiavut Government was established as part of the Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement – the first Inuit region of Canada to achieve self-government. Through this new government researchers must apply for permits to conduct any research within Nunatsiavut and this process includes agreements on data sharing and the involvement of Inuit in designing and participating in the research. This process has likely enhanced awareness of the current and past problems associated with environmental research in this region and the need to do things differently.

Below are answers and comments to each question from the two different groups:

**If you are involved in research with communities of color, in the US or abroad, have you actively sought out local collaborators / liaisons / guides? Why or why not?**

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

**YGS:** Recently, some First Nations have been asked about their interest/needs with respect to geoscience in Yukon and their answers/comments have been included in some parts of the YGS research. The YGS finds this challenging because each First Nations group (14 in total) all have different interests and none of them have any Yukon-wide interests. Attempts to engage all First Nations groups by holding open houses to inform groups of the work the YGS does, and its program activities have not been successful. However, engagement with First Nations is happening more regularly and YGS is beginning to understand what the different First Nations priorities are with respect to geoscience. For example, climate-change impacts and renewable energy sources related to self-reliance and self-determination, and mapping their Category A and B Lands (part of their traditional territory that they have full and part ownership over).

**MUN:** There are a number of active research projects at Memorial that have sought out collaborators and contributors from Nunatsiavut (and perhaps other regions as well). A couple examples, that some pod members are a part of, include projects that sought out local collaborators at the project inception (prior to proposal submission) but differed in the extent of “buy in” or involvement by local community members. For example, a much older project sought letters of support from local community councils which indicated interest in the research being proposed and willingness to aid in seeking community members interested in participating. This led to some involvement by a few individuals over 4-5 years but never really went beyond field assistance. More recently, another project sought key project partners after the proposal was largely crafted but also had key components required through the research approval process because some of the research was taking place in Nunatsiavut. This has led to increased involvement by local practitioners who have made a good part of the field work possible and contributed to discussions of how the work would be carried out and improved. This project is still ongoing and has been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, however, significant portion of funds have been reallocated for the extension time period for the team to travel or support community members travel to the institution to share what we’ve learned and obtain feedback on what community members make of these observations/findings we have. On the most recent project, also in Nunatsiavut, the proposal was quite unusual and did not include specific research questions or hypotheses. Instead it was focussed on the development of a collaborative research process and program that attempts to include and hopefully integrate successfully Indigenous knowledge and Western Scientific knowledge to improve the understanding of coastal ecosystems of Nunatsiavut and their response to climate change. This project currently supports five Inuit youth research coordinators located in four of the five communities who are engaged in the development of field observation gathering through their own use of western science techniques but also reliance on local knowledge experts. This project is proceeding very slowly but also very intentionally such that relationships among the large group of team members spanning academic researchers, NGOs, Nunatsiavut government employees, and community members can be built. Part of this is occurring through outreach activities organized by the IYRC which we hope will enable us to build partnerships needed to develop common goals for this research project based on questions and concerns posed by community members. We hope to obtain consensus and common understanding by first making observations of the coastal ecosystems together.

**Were any local collaborators included as authors on presentations and/or papers?**

**YGS:** No.

**MUN:** A few collaborators on the most recent project do have publications with Inuit community member co-authors who contributed to the research (e.g. study of arctic char movement). This more recent project has drafted an authorship policy that has involved input from all members but also carefully considers Inuit community members involved in various stages and aspects of the research.

**Actively sought to include local students in your research? Why or why not?**

**YGS:** Yes, we do (inconsistently) actively seek our local First Nations students to come and work for us as summer students or join us during our fieldwork for short periods of time to provide exposure and experience to our field of work.

**MUN:** Yes, and this has been greatly helped by various contacts including NGOs and the Nunatsiavut government. We have hired five Inuit research coordinators who are at different stages in their career and academic training.

**Sought to build trust and form long-term connections and collaborations with local institutions if your project is multi-year / ongoing? Why or why not?**

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

**YGS:** Recently, our group has had many discussions about how to start building relationships that lead to trust between the Yukon Geological Survey and local First Nations governments and individuals. We commonly organize information sessions in an attempt to inform the First Nations of our science goals, project timelines and opportunities for locals to get involved. The YGS is often confronted with a deep mistrust of all activities associated with the Yukon Government (YG), which we perceive as a result of many decades of previous negative interactions between YG and First Nations (because First Nations really don't have much of a voice when it comes to YG decisions). Further, as people trained as geologists (and most not having grown up in the Canadian north), geologists feel unequipped to build these relationships in a positive way (and some employees probably have racial sentiments towards First Nations, although never outwardly spoken about).

**MUN:** Yes, this is particularly the case in the most recent largest project where multiple planning workshops were centered around building trust, developing approaches to ensuring communication and enhanced collaborations with local communities, Nunatsiavut government (one of the leads on the proposal is a member of the Nunatsiavut Government), and local NGOs. We are hopeful that this 3-year project is able to lay the foundation for what we hope is a community-based research program that can be sustained by a broad membership spanning the different partners but able to expand or change as needed to suit the needs of the communities of Nunatsiavut. Building local capacity to exchange and build knowledge on these coastal ecosystems is essential to their effective management in the face of climate change and for the benefit of the Inuit people. We hope that this becomes an excellent example for other communities indigenous or otherwise. We have seen some very good examples of how well (and how hard) this works in terms of impact and effectiveness in the Alaskan Arctic (e.g. Arctic Borderlands Cooperative and others).

**Shared data and findings with the local/regional community in a way that is more accessible? (i.e., translating into different languages). Why or why not?**

**YGS:** Yes, if there is interest.

**MUN:** As part of a fisheries workshop in Nunatsiavut we attended at the very beginning of one project in order to meet fishers and community members in Nain, we presented some of our research plans and questions using a series of posters. We brought two sets of each with one having been translated into Inuktitut and included maps so we could sit down and discuss areas of interest.

We plan to do more like this with our findings when we can return. We also have a clear data management plan which is facilitating our data sharing on a platform that the Nunatsiavut Government is happy with using as they have not yet set up their own repository. We recognize that data sharing in this way is not the only way we need to share what we are learning and we intend in all three projects to use multiple venues spanning from social media (facebook is the choice of these communities) for rapid communication of main findings or announcements of forums/discussions to working group sessions and regional meetings. With the most recent project we are putting resources into a newsletter that will be shared in hard copy and electronically across the five communities.

**Educated yourself and your group/team about local politics, culture, customs, and knowledge, including the history of colonialism / settler colonialism in the region? Why or why not?**

**YGS:** In Yukon, courses have been put together that teach the history of colonialism and the arrival of white persons in Yukon. This course is mandatory for EMR employees and has recently been added as an item that needs to be included in the coming year's Personal Performance Plan for all YG staff. In the recent past it has not been a priority of most employees of YTG to participate in this course but that seems to be changing with many people actively enrolling in these courses.

**MUN:** Within the most recent research project some of this education is happening in real time within the project through the sharing of information, literature and other resources pertaining to politics, culture, knowledge and history in Nunatsiavut. This is only scratching the surface and we do need more mechanisms particularly to be better informed to better understand the severe impacts of colonialism and its lasting impacts on these and other indigenous communities and people in those regions we live and work with. Memorial University has begun a very important initiative that takes needed steps to ensure indigenous consent to any research impacting members of any indigenous group :  
<https://www.mun.ca/research/Indigenous/consent.php>

However, we are unaware of specific resources providing needed education on local politics, culture, customs, and knowledge, including the history of colonialism / settler colonialism in our region.[SZ1]

We do have an Office of Indigenous Affairs at Memorial University and there are some resources available via their website including:

- Clear statements of important terms (e.g. decolonization)  
[https://www.mun.ca/indigenous/indigenous-affairs/reports/Definitions\\_SFI.pdf](https://www.mun.ca/indigenous/indigenous-affairs/reports/Definitions_SFI.pdf)
- Draft of Strategic Plan for Indigenization of Campus  
[https://www.mun.ca/indigenous/indigenous-affairs/reports/SFI\\_Senate\\_Draft.pdf](https://www.mun.ca/indigenous/indigenous-affairs/reports/SFI_Senate_Draft.pdf)

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

**YGS:** No, YGS and other government science programs proceed at self-interest timelines and often express frustration when these are delayed by the slower timelines that First Nations governments proceed.

**MUN:** No, even in the case of the most recent example described here where the focus of the project is to build relationships and understanding all project members recognize that doing this effectively requires separately allocated time and resources to develop these key processes and identify priorities.

**Is respecting culture and customs included as part of your code of conduct?**

**YGS:** There is no specific code of conduct for EMR but the list of values of the organization does not specifically speak to how we conduct ourselves with First Nations.

**MUN:** In the most recent project we have drafted a set of Principles and Guidelines which clearly sets the respecting of culture, knowledge and customs as one of the first guiding principles of the project. This seems like a useful resource/tool to develop in any project or research program that works with any community of color. It enables a very direct and explicit way to initiate much needed practices among all team members.

**Acknowledged local communities / Indigenous tribes in your research results?**

**YGS:** Acknowledgement of local Indigenous tribes is becoming more common at meetings and events but is not included in publications distributed by the YGS. It has been acknowledged that it would be an easy thing to start doing at the YGS (one small bit of progress motivated by URGE!!!).

**MUN:** I believe there are researchers at Memorial University that are already doing this as well as including their indigenous partners as co-authors. However, this is only just now starting.

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

**YGS:** In some cases, the YGS provides land use planning information requested by the First Nations. In other cases, larger mineral exploration projects must include extensive First Nations consultation and involvement and attempt to address local needs and concerns of First Nations impacted by a project.

**MUN:** The most recent project example described does include inuit communities of Nunatsiavut in ways that we hope will have broader, lasting impacts which assist in

addressing some of these community's needs and concerns surrounding coastal resources. For example, by co-designing a community based research program and training Inuit youth research coordinators (a central part of this project) and including key partners we hope to build much needed capacity that can draw upon local indigenous knowledge and science to help manage coastal natural resources in the face of rapid climate change.

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

**YGS:** From YGS's perspective, there has been recent good success working with First Nations on geothermal studies and geohazard research because these areas align with many First Nations interests. Other types of research the YGS conducts (bedrock studies) typically do not resonate with most First Nations groups, but the YGS is discovering that certain aspects of such projects can be of interest to them. For example, a characterization study of plutons in Yukon that was motivated by porphyry potential has very little interest to the First Nations, but the geochemical data that was collected for that project is of great interest to those that want to understand the geothermal potential of their traditional territory.

**MUN:** Yes, in the case of this one example the research coordinators are full time employees paid off the project funds. Additionally, local knowledge experts will be paid for their contributions to observations submitted and collected as part of this research program. The need for compensation was made abundantly clear from the experiences of other research programs that have been successful in their work on environmental research in indigenous lands. Only makes sense really as we all should be paid for our work and contributions!

**Considered and prioritized research questions and research locations based on needs of local communities, in addition to how impactful they are seen within academia?**

**YGS:** Mineral potential studies have been conducted by the YGS when First Nations specifically ask for this to be done. In other cases, I don't think this is done except where there is category A Lands which require specific permission to conduct research on, these areas may be strategically avoided in some projects.

**MUN:** Again, with the most recent project this was done in the most explicit and effective way by now developing the research questions as part of the ongoing collaboration that has begun and is built upon some earlier and previous relationships. This is a very slow but deliberate process and one that many researchers were initially quite uncomfortable with but everyone is fully on board now as we figure out a sort of hybrid approach to knowledge co-production.