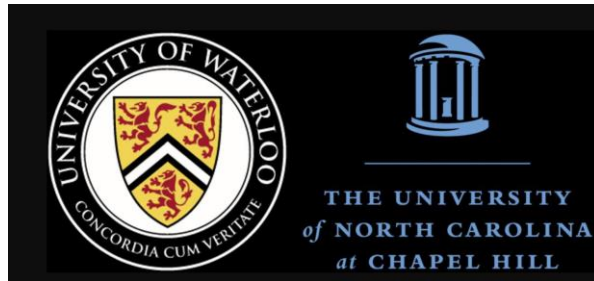


URGE

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URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for UNC Chapel Hill and University of Waterloo

This is what was found by the NARWaL pod at UNC Chapel Hill and University of Waterloo 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:**
 - Broadly, we think that there stands to be improvement in this area, but we have some uncertainty as to the best practices.
 - Lots of our work is at scales larger than individual communities, meaning continental to global, which makes the question of community engagement very challenging because of either the lack of clearly identifiable communities or far too many communities to meaningfully engage. To date we have not explicitly incorporated any forms of community engagement into these projects, though actions like open data/analysis or visualization projects are perhaps some of the potential solutions to this problem.
 - We have included land acknowledgments within site descriptions or where appropriate in projects at scales with readily identifiable Indigenous communities.
 - In some cases we have worked with local stakeholders and/or guides to help contextualize our studies or identify appropriate sub-sites within our study sites. However, in some of these cases we felt that the stakeholders may either have been unrepresentative of the local communities (e.g., national/international NGOs) or not representative of the whole community (e.g., a single person or group of people where there are multiple interlocking communities).
 - In field work where frequent, casual interactions with local residents occur, we have tried to speak with anyone we run in to about the work we are doing.
 - We have made a few attempts to reach out to tribal leadership and had poor response. This was a discussion point and we're uncertain if this is an unsurprising outcome but should not be a deterrence to future attempts, or if we need to rethink how this might be done.
- **What worked well in these interactions?**



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

- Working with local community leaders/non-profits -- ensuring that any non-profits worked with have similar goals/interests as the people they serve.
 - Bringing along someone who speaks the local language as well as writing up and distributing results in the local language in a format accessible to the local residents.
 - If you have a local guide, paying them well and building a long-term working relationship with that person.
 - When encountering local residents, being friendly and kind. If folks seem interested in interacting, explain the work that you are doing, how it relates to the history of the area (if you're well-informed) and listen to what they have to say.
- **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**
 - In some instances, communication and interactions were primarily through policy makers and/or NGOs, rather than with communities themselves, which may have biased our views and alienated the communities. In the future, we could prioritize working with both organizations and communities, possibly through a contact who has relationships with the community or by directly and respectfully engaging with the community, if they are willing.
 - Some efforts to reach out to tribal offices and meet with community elders were not successful. In our experiences and the experiences of our colleagues, either contacting the community did not lead to anything further or it went poorly. We are not currently sure why one interaction went poorly and are reaching out to that colleague to learn what information was presented and how it was done so we can learn from this attempt, as several of us have worked in this region or will be soon working in this region. In other instances where reaching out did not lead to further connections or conversations, we could consider reaching out to other tribal leaders, although it would be important for us to avoid pestering and pushing for communication when the community is not interested.
 - **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**
 - Ensure that final results and all relevant data are accessible *and* digestible (i.e. not in the form of a journal article) to all impacted communities.
 - When possible, incorporate historical traditional knowledge about the study area into the site descriptions and discussion of final publications.
 - Self-education on the impacts of colonization in the project area.
 - If field work is still occurring, engage individuals you encounter as equals rather than people for you to 'educate'. You can likely learn as much from them as vice-versa.
 - Begin thinking longer-term about the project and future projects, if there is no local collaborator currently then make efforts to create a network for future collaborations.



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

- In the acknowledgements of any final manuscript, consider mentioning that a lack of local collaboration was a shortcoming that needs to be addressed in future work.
- **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?**

In our discussion, we found that none of us had a clear idea as to how we might go about reaching out to communities of color if we had a project that involved them. I believe that this points to the fundamental lack of training academia provides researchers on how to work with communities of color and/or that have been marginalized. Introductory courses as to how to start the process and the dos and don'ts should be easily accessible information.

First and foremost, researchers need to have training in how to work with these communities. There are many publications that provide some guidance to improve the process of working with communities of color. Recently published work outlined ten steps that researchers in Canada can take to responsibly (non-exploitatively) work with Indigenous communities ([link](#)). While this publication does provide a good starting point, Indigenous peoples are not-monolithics. Furthermore, communities of color in general are extremely diverse and all might require different approaches to foster a safe and productive relationship. Having pieces that outline first steps and considerations to working with certain communities can introduce the blind-spots many people have when first entering this research space.

Within each lab group and at department level, guidelines should be established on how researchers should interact with communities of color (tailored to their needs). Additionally, keeping track of who has reached out to communities of color, what the response was, their preferred type of relationship (long-term collaboration, short-term compensation, etc.), and any personal/professional contacts can help begin to build trust and avoid repeatedly asking the same people for their time and energy. Having guidelines could begin to address well-intentioned but poorly executed ad hoc efforts or failing to involve these communities in the process at all. The burden should be placed on researchers to do the due diligence.

Beyond guiding documents we think it's important to invite people with diverse perspectives to projects at the beginning of the project and not as a performative step that results in tokenism. Authoring Indigenous colleagues, for example, even if they are not from the community you are working with, can provide you with a set of experience that could mitigate people's implicit biases. Having a diverse team could make the community you are working with feel safer.



Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

Academy's reward structure is not built to support slow and long term relationships. We believe a shift in culture needs to happen, such that researchers have the time to invest time, listen to, and work with communities of color. We briefly discussed the value of organizations such as Alaska Native Science Commission in facilitating partnerships and communication between science and research and Alaska Native communities.

We also had a long discussion about our roles in this space as large scale modelers. We often work across large spatial scales and time frames and often not directly with a population. We should look at and cite collections of knowledge (ex. Indigenous knowledge) that are outside of academic writing, identify meta-community and organization (ex. Alaska Native Science Commission) and think about how we can benefit them and vice-versa, and incorporate social impacts and highlight that some communities will feel the impact more than others.

- **Additional thoughts/experiences on research projects involving minority communities and communities of color.**