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Policies for Working with Communities of Color for the University of Wyoming

This is what was found by U. Wyo Geology & Geophysics Urge Pod on Policies for Working with Communities of Color, as well as plans for improved processes and/or needed resources.

Although our department hasn't had much experience in working with communities of color, we have identified resources at the University of Wyoming that can educate and train us on policies and outreach for working with communities of color moving forward.

- **Audit of previous interactions with communities of color at our organization:**

We sent a short survey to faculty in the Department of Geology and Geophysics to learn about interactions with communities of color. Ten (out of 26) faculty members filled out the survey. We additionally looked at faculty web pages to supplement the information collected in the survey.

International communities of color include: Aboriginal homelands of central Australia, Central Asia, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Greenland, India, Kenya, Mexico (x2), Mongolia, South Africa, Tajikistan, United Kingdom, Zimbabwe, Ocean Drilling Project Cruises.

Domestic communities of color include: Northern Alaska, Aleutian arc, Newark NJ, Wyoming Latina Youths.

Tribal Lands: Hopi Reservation, Navajo Nation, Arizona reservations, Wind River Reservation.

Based on our limited survey results, interactions with communities of color range from none to long-term, meaningful interactions. Several faculty wrote about meeting local families, sharing meals, experiencing local culture, and learning about the challenges in their lives and home countries. We highlight here four responses that represent particularly meaningful interactions with communities of color:

- The Wyoming Latina Youth Conference is an annual event that draws over a hundred 5-11th grade girls from around Wyoming to UW to participate in a 2-day conference focusing on promoting education, arts, science, self awareness, financial aid opportunities, personal health and safety. Dr. JJ Shinker is an important contributor to this event.
- Faculty who are part of the University's current Epscor grant (e.g., Dr. Bryan Shuman) are working on projects on the Wind River Reservation. Native Americans are actively involved in the project.
- One faculty member who responded to the survey anonymously wrote, "We were proposing a restoration effort that would result in water capture. However, water is sacred and could not be impeded by the engineering solution proposed. So by listening we began seeking other solutions that would be culturally appropriate."

- Dr. Ellen Currano has been working in Ethiopia since 2009, on a collaborative team that includes Ethiopian co-PIs. Several Ethiopian undergraduates participated in fieldwork, and one Ethiopian student received his PhD at Southern Methodist University as part of the project. After graduating, this student became the first professor of paleobotany at Southern Methodist University. All fossils are stored at the National Museum of Ethiopia, and the team has taught museum staff how to curate plant fossils.

Broadening out to UW as a whole, our team found the following, which could provide opportunities for future interactions with communities of color:

- Former president Laurie Nichols really prioritized improving relationships with the Wind River Reservation. How many of her initiatives are still in existence?
- Native American Summer Institute: <http://www.uwyo.edu/naercc/nasi/index.html>

- **What worked well in these interactions?**

- Involving the community in the science projects from an early stage, including project design. Continue this through the project, for instance, by having community leaders come to yearly research team meetings.
- Involving people from the community in the research project by recruiting research assistants and project managers from the community.
- Including co-PIs and graduate students from the country/community.
- Returning to the same community for >5 years allows meaningful interactions to occur and relationships, collaborations, and trust to develop.
- Science outreach in the communities that starts with children in middle school and continues with meaningful experiences or high school students.
- Presentations about research to local groups.
- Before visiting a new research site, learning local rules and customs. Follow the rules, and do your best to be culturally sensitive (e.g., appropriate dress). And major bonus points for learning at least a little bit of the language.
- Building in time for informal interactions with local communities.
- Acknowledgement of land in coursework.
- Workshops that engage students in active learning. One-on-one conversations regarding opportunities at UW and beyond. Especially conversations about opportunities to do anything beyond high school.
- Listening, patience, understanding, respect

- **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**

- Research projects should be developed based on community needs. We should not just propose our scientific projects but instead collaborate with community members to get their input on scientific projects that will take place on their lands. Part of this process requires including community collaborators in the project planning stages. Additionally, one size doesn't fit all. Interacting with villagers in South Africa is very

- different from interacting with miners in a Pt. mine or impoverished people of color in a big city.
- Several projects did not have direct involvement of indigenous partners in preparation of scientific papers.
  - Time was key. Just meeting someone or attending a workshop is OK, but it really takes long periods of time interacting with folks to develop relationships and internalize their perspectives.
  - At the Native American Summer Institute in previous years, Native American high school students were on campus for a recruiting event and went to a really racist play. (link to a Boomerang article on the event here: [https://www.wyomingnews.com/laramieboomerang/news/fantasticks-scene-prompts-walkout-incites-condemnation/article\\_b952c1c8-3381-5e40-8973-4924ae54b85f.html](https://www.wyomingnews.com/laramieboomerang/news/fantasticks-scene-prompts-walkout-incites-condemnation/article_b952c1c8-3381-5e40-8973-4924ae54b85f.html) ). Another group of students in this program were walking down Grand Avenue and had racist slurs shouted at them.
  - Non-engaging or non-interactive workshops.
  - Assuming a solution.
- **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**
    - Present research outcomes in the community. Might get people excited about their lands and will give them a glimpse of what scientists do, which could lead to recruitment in the community.
    - Acknowledge Native peoples in manuscripts and presentations that use samples from the field.  
<https://native-land.ca/>  
Useful website: <https://www.landgrabu.org/>
    - Identify data previously collected on Native land and take steps to share research results if this hasn't been done.
    - Work with UW's High Plains American Indian Research Institute (HPAIRI): <http://www.uwyo.edu/hpairi/>
      - HPAIRI offers a Resource Directory ([http://www.uwyo.edu/hpairi/\\_files/docs/hpairi%20resource%20directory%202015.pdf](http://www.uwyo.edu/hpairi/_files/docs/hpairi%20resource%20directory%202015.pdf)) that lists Wyoming Tribal Leaders, online resources for Native American language systems, Native American businesses, and contact information.
    - Avoid use of the university's current slogan, "The World Needs more Cowboys."
  - **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?**
    - The Epscor Office at the University of Wyoming (<http://www.uwyo.edu/epscor/who-we-are/index.html>) has been working for years to develop connections with the Native American Tribes in the state of Wyoming. Our department, and individual researchers, should invite the Epscor Office to educate us

- on outreach and policies when working with the Native American Tribes. Contact Sarah Konrad ([skonrad@uwyo.edu](mailto:skonrad@uwyo.edu)) or Brent Ewers ([beewers@uwyo.edu](mailto:beewers@uwyo.edu))
- Science outreach at Central Wyoming Community College. For initial stages, we should contact Sarah Spoonhunter for information, as she can give us more information on connecting with Native American Tribes:  
<https://www.cwc.edu/faculty/tarissa-spoonhunter/>
  - Providing researchers links to the reading for context before work is initiated in order to establish an understanding of definitions and guiding principles
    - Examples of other institutional guidelines for working with Indigenous communities and communities of color:
      - Guiding Principles for Engaging in Research with Native American Communities:  
[https://hsc.unm.edu/vision2020/common/docs/guiding\\_principles\\_research\\_native\\_communities2012.pdf](https://hsc.unm.edu/vision2020/common/docs/guiding_principles_research_native_communities2012.pdf)
      - Steps for Conducting Research and Evaluation in Native Communities:  
<https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/nace-steps-conducting-research-evaluation-native-communities.pdf>
      - 'Walk Softly and Listen Carefully' Building Research Relationships with Tribal Communities:  
[https://www.ncai.org/attachments/PolicyPaper\\_SpMCHTcjxRRjMEjDnPmesENPzjHTwhOIOWxIWdSrykJuQggG\\_NCAI-WalkSoftly.pdf](https://www.ncai.org/attachments/PolicyPaper_SpMCHTcjxRRjMEjDnPmesENPzjHTwhOIOWxIWdSrykJuQggG_NCAI-WalkSoftly.pdf)
      - How to include Indigenous researchers and their knowledge:  
<https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00022-1>
      - Research with Indigenous Peoples - University of Alaska Fairbanks Institutional Review Board - content adapted, with permission, from the University of New Mexico Guiding Principles for Engaging in Research with Native American Communities (listed above):  
<https://www.uaf.edu/irb/indigenous/>
      - Community Research Collaboratives from the National Education Policy Center, School of Education, University of Colorado Boulder and Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education and references therein:  
<https://nepc.colorado.edu/sites/default/files/publications/PM%20York%20CRC.pdf>
    - Establish guidelines and support (funding and/or "time" release?) for early planning.
    - Establish understanding with the University re: student and pre-tenure faculty research timelines and expectations when working with communities of color.
    - Develop a point of contact within the University for coordination and alignment of department- and university-level goals and approaches .
    - Develop points of contacts in communities we work with to align research- and community-level goals and approaches.

- Investigate and/or develop scholarship opportunities for Native American students.
  
- Survey results:
  - Time to build relationships and trust. We often come in for a brief field campaign and leave. Communities do not see the results of the work we do on their land or for their benefits. Giving back in some way is vital.
  - Opportunities for interactions beyond “science” settings. Things like conferences are helpful, but still not as useful as informal interactions
  - Not sure
  - Many students of non white origin to act as intermediaries when working in foreign regions
  - Simply put, time money, and more people willing to put in time and money

It is clear from these compiled experiences and the compiled information on resources around campus that we have the opportunity to improve our current approach to working with communities of color. Moving forward, it would be ideal to have a University-level set of procedures for researchers to follow (modelled after those listed as examples above). In the shorter-term, it may be more realistic for a department-level set of procedures, expanding on information collected here. We can utilize past experiences from our researchers, compiled here, to tailor and inform these procedures in order to create respectful environments.