

# URGE

## Unlearning Racism in Geoscience

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### URGE Policies for Working with Communities of Color for UW Madison Geoscience

This is what was found by UW Geoscience D+I Committee Pod at University of Wisconsin - Madison 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:\**
  - The UW Geology Museum scientist (Dave Lovelace) and his team work along the border of the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming. An effort to work with both of the Tribal Historical Preservation Offices (there are two Tribes represented on the WRR) was undertaken last summer (all virtually). The goal is to work with tribal members to find an appropriate scientific name for a newly discovered fossil species that would reflect the Tribes' sovereignty and history on the land. Secondly, a goal was to have school-aged children working with Elders on the naming process - but that was not practical with Covid. We have arrived at a name for one of the new fossils. The Elders enjoyed the process, and the THPO was appreciative that we reached out. This is the start of what we hope will be longer-term relationships with the tribal community.
  
- **What worked well in these interactions?**
  - We started by reaching out to our UW-Madison's Native American relations officer, and asked their advice. They provided us with the **Four R's**. It is globally applicable.:
    - **Respect** – respect as a sovereign nation and treat tribal officials as you would officials of any other government. First do your homework by reading the history of the contemporary First Nation.
    - **Relationships** – long-term relationships work best for Native Nations as such one-off or short relationships usually benefit the non-Native American partner at the time and expense of the Native community.
    - **Reciprocity** – the work should mutually-benefit both parties, or include compensation if a reciprocal outcome is directly possible.
    - **Responsibility** – whatever info you gain will be held with confidentiality and good stewardship.



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- **Phone conversations were much more productive than emails.** There is more that can be discussed back and forth between the partners, and it is easier to be expressive in a live conversation, whether in person or digitally.
- **Time.** Things move at different speeds than we in academia might be used to. I am led to believe (by other colleagues) that the 6 months process was actually quite fast.
- **Being forthright, honest, and open.** I expressed my desire to highlight and amplify the sovereignty of the Tribe, discussing our understanding that while the land we work on is currently Department of the Interior or private, the land was forcibly taken during a period of ethnic cleansing by white colonizers. The individuals we spoke with appreciate the acknowledgement - that may be different for any given individual.
- We were asked for support to help clean and preserve a fossil that was illegally collected by other parties on the reservation. We **offered support**, as well as expressing an interest in **outreach opportunities** and an interest in participating in tribal learning opportunities for our students too (**e.g., reciprocal sharing of information**). This was appreciated.
- **What did not work well, and how can this be better addressed in future plans?**
  - This was all done in hindsight. **PLAN AHEAD!** We had been working near Reservation lands, and even onto land that was formerly reservation lands prior to being sold to a private individual who then donated the land for an environmental easement to the state Game and Fish Dept (it was the G&F with whom we were permitted to survey/excavate on the land). This extreme proximity began the thoughts of working with tribal members, but many colleagues expressed the difficulty in this. We felt it was worth the effort, and it has been! I wish we had planned ahead.
  - Next time - we intend to **include tribal members in our research** venture from the start. We intend to invite local tribal members to observe us in the field and offer a paid internship position for two tribal students. The choice to use two (or more) students is purposeful - we hope it will lead to more meaningful dialog if the interns are not isolated and alone.
  - Take the time to learn about the community. **Do your homework!** I was fortunate enough to have had an interest in Native American history growing up in the area - but I would not have cold-called another Native population if I wasn't at least broadly aware of their history.
- **Are there ways to improve the outcome of projects already undertaken?**



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- Maintain or improve upon communication (always room for improvement). Give serious consideration to WHY we should include members - if this is about checking boxes, or a one-off exercise in inclusion, it will likely do more harm than good. Any interaction with a community of color should leave them feeling better after the interaction than before. We hope to be able to offer up to three scholarships to bring tribal students to UW for their undergraduate education.
- **Are there specific resources or guidelines that are needed to improve the process for planning ahead and working with communities of color?**
  - Learn about and use [Land Acknowledgments](#) appropriately (in all talks and publications).
  - Find out [whose land it is](#) - but go beyond this map, and learn about the communities and make sure the map is accurate, or best reflects how a community might want to be included in an acknowledgement.