



Research that Benefits Native People

A GUIDE FOR TRIBAL LEADERS

FOUNDATIONS OF RESEARCH:
AN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

MANAGING THE DESIGNING
AND PLANNING OF RESEARCH

USING ETHICS AS A GUIDE
FOR MANAGING RESEARCH

UNDERSTANDING EVALUATION

CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN
PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHERS



PARTNERS

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) is the oldest, largest and most representative membership organization that works to advance the interests of tribal governments by protecting tribal sovereignty. The NCAI Policy Research Center is a tribally-driven think tank that supports Native communities in shaping their own future by gathering credible data, building tribal research capacity, providing research support, and convening forums addressing critical policy questions.



The First Americans Land-grant College and Organization Network (FALCON), a non-profit association of tribal land grant administrators, directors, and faculty, was established in 2003 to ensure the well being of America's indigenous peoples and their tribal nations through the excellent dedication of Tribal College Land Grant professionals. FALCON fosters communication, cooperation and professionalism among Tribal College Land Grant education, promotes and preserves American Indian culture and language in all its professional activities, and supports members in maintaining the unique identity of Tribal Colleges and Universities.



The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) is a national voice for American Indian children and families. NICWA, a private, non-profit membership organization based in Portland, Oregon, is the most comprehensive source of information on American Indian child welfare and the only national American Indian organization focused specifically on the tribal capacity to prevent child abuse and neglect. Their members include tribes, individuals—both Indian and non-Indian—and private organizations from around the United States concerned with American Indian child and family issues. Together, NICWA's partners, board, and staff work to protect the most vital resource of American Indian people—our children.



The Administration for Native Americans (ANA) was established in 1974 through the Native American Programs Act (NAPA). ANA is the only federal agency serving all Native Americans, including 562 federally recognized Tribes, American Indian and Alaska Native organizations, Native Hawaiian organizations and Native populations throughout the Pacific basin. The mission of ANA is to promote the goal of self-sufficiency and cultural preservation for Native Americans by providing social and economic development opportunities through financial assistance, training, and technical assistance to eligible Tribes and Native American communities.

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Research that Benefits Native People: A Guide for Tribal Leaders is the work of numerous tribal leaders, researchers, practitioners, and students.

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We would like to express our appreciation to the many participants who volunteered to join in the piloting of the curriculum. This curriculum could not have been developed without the honest feedback, insight, and questions of each participant. Many thanks to the tribal leaders, community leaders, and students who participated during the pilots in Tazlina, Alaska; Phoenix, Arizona; Reno, Nevada; and Washington, DC.

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During this year's National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Policy Research Center's *Annual Tribal Leader/Scholar Forum*, I shared with our assembly of tribal nations my thoughts about the importance of research in our communities. I reminded them that we want to be sure that research occurring in our communities has its proper place in supporting our people: the health of our people, the education of our people, and the well-being of our people. In addition, we want to make sure that any research project conducted in our communities has an implementation plan. What good is data without an action plan to implement the findings and impact the people that you are doing the research for?

This is why NCAI's new curriculum—*Research that Benefits Native People: A Guide for Tribal Leaders*—is such an important tool for tribal leaders, their staff, and Native citizens. Historically, researchers and anthropologists have visited our communities to extract information from us, frequently misinterpreting and misusing it, and have minimized the validity of our Indigenous knowledge. As sovereign nations, tribes have a role in the research that is conducted in their communities and in regulating that research which occurs on their land and with their citizens.

This five-module curriculum answers the many calls from tribal leaders who for years have wanted resources to make better decisions about the proposed research in their communities and researchers who want to come into their communities. The curriculum provides tribal leaders with considerations for establishing and utilizing research review policies and boards to protect communities from harm, selecting a suitable research partner, applying values and ethics as guides throughout research projects, and understanding program evaluation. Most importantly, the curriculum reinforces the validity of our Indigenous ways of knowing and reminds us and others that their value is equal to western research standards.

I am grateful to NCAI and its Policy Research Center in providing our tribal nations with this invaluable publication and training. Six years ago, our leadership established the Policy Research Center as a place where information could be developed to proactively prepare tribal leaders and support Indian Country in shaping its own future. This Center has engaged with a range of Native and non-Native partners to ensure that our communities are valued partners in research, that tribal sovereignty is paramount, that Indigenous knowledge is valued and respected, and that when a research project ends, communities are stronger for the experience. *Research that Benefits Native People: A Guide for Tribal Leaders* symbolizes the mission of NCAI and its Policy Research Center, and will become a foundational resource that our leaders turn to for generations to come.

JOE GARCIA
NCAI PRESIDENT

Project Overview

What is this project?

In response to tribal leader requests for more basic information about research, the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) Policy Research Center has developed a curriculum and training to equip tribal leaders, Native students, and other Native community members to understand and manage research and program evaluation. With an emphasis on an Indigenous perspective and approach, this tool presents learners with typical research scenarios that tribal leaders face and gives them an opportunity to consider Western research activities. Over the course of three years, the research curriculum has been piloted in five different communities from Arizona to Alaska. The experiences and feedback received from tribal leaders, tribal staff, members of the community, and Native students who participated in a pilot training shaped the final version of the five module curriculum.

Why undertake the project?

American Indians and Alaska Natives are underrepresented in many major data collection efforts and statistical analyses, making it difficult for tribes, states, and the federal government to provide policy solutions and social programs that effectively target and benefit Native communities. Access to data allows tribal leaders to make informed decisions, be proactive about shaping the future of their communities, secure funding for programs to benefit the community, and refine the programs currently offered to tribal citizens. However, many Native people are wary of research and do not trust researchers. This is largely due to the fact that the term 'research' generally reminds Native people of the myriad projects historically conducted by outsiders that did not benefit Native communities, and even, in some cases, resulted in harm to Native communities.

As increasing numbers of Native people are developing the skills and experience to understand and conduct research that could greatly impact their communities, Native communities are becoming more comfortable with a number of research and program evaluation activities. However, the research process requires specific skills, and without these skills, it is difficult to evaluate the potential impact

(positive or negative) of particular projects. Through this curriculum, tribal leaders and Native communities can build their capacity to engage with research, allowing them to identify, access, and better understand data that may benefit their communities.

About the curriculum

By recognizing the value of both Indigenous ways of knowing and Western research approaches, tribal leaders can choose to reap the benefits of Western research while still respecting their own community standards. This research curriculum is intended to be a resource for tribal leadership as they fulfill their role as responsible stewards of their communities. This curriculum helps to start a dialogue about reconciling Indigenous and Western worldviews and provides practical information on how to engage with a broad range of research techniques.

The five modules broadly cover the most critical issues facing Native communities interested in research.

MODULE 1: FOUNDATIONS OF RESEARCH: AN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVE

- > Introduction to how tribal values relate to research; these will be emphasized throughout the curriculum
- > Introduction to the context and situations in which a tribal leader may need a working knowledge of research and related issues

MODULE 2: MANAGING THE DESIGNING AND PLANNING OF RESEARCH

- > Designing a research study, including how-to lessons and practical considerations
- > Guiding a research design process
- > Developing a research plan

MODULE 3: USING ETHICS AS A GUIDE FOR MANAGING RESEARCH

- > Identifying and understanding the basic ethical considerations related to conducting research
- > Developing skills for applying ethical considerations to research

MODULE 4: CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHERS

- > Identifying the basic considerations involved in choosing and evaluating a research partner
- > Identifying key characteristics of effective tribal research policy, Institutional Review Boards (IRBs), cooperative agreements, and various research agreements
- > Introduction to developing a skill set for contributing to a successful partnership

MODULE 5: UNDERSTANDING EVALUATION

- > Designing and implementing a program evaluation(s)
- > Validating basic principles of culturally competent evaluation techniques in tribal communities
- > Identifying what an evaluation can be expected to measure

MODULE ONE:

Foundations of Research: An Indigenous Perspective

DEFINITIONS

Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR)

Involves the community in planning and conducting a research study.

Culture

The set of beliefs, customs, experiences, and social ways of behaving of a people or group that are transferred, communicated, or passed along to succeeding generations.

Indigenous Knowledge

A complex, interrelated, and diverse body of knowledge based on the collective wisdom of ancestors; built through observation and experience; and learned, transmitted, and retained in the telling of stories to succeeding generations.

Stewardship

Moral responsibility accepted for the welfare or needs of a community or group. As a tribal leader, the stewardship responsibility is two-fold: 1) to enhance the well-being of the community and 2) to protect the community from harm.

Values

The social principles, goals, and standards held or accepted by an individual, class, or society.

Lesson Topics

This lesson covers the following topics:

- > Overview of Five Suggested Core Values Related to Research in Native Communities
- > The Value and Validity of Indigenous Knowledge
- > The Cultural Aspects of Research
- > Tribal Stewardship and Its Relationship to Research
- > The Expression of Tribal Sovereignty in Research
- > The Benefits Research Can Offer to Native People

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, participants will:

- > Understand five core tribal values concerning research that are explored in this curriculum.
- > Be able to identify and use appropriate tribal values in decisions regarding research in tribal communities.

Overview of Five Suggested Core Values Related to Research in Native Communities

Coyote Steals the Sun and Moon

Coyote is a bad hunter who never kills anything. Once he watched Eagle hunting rabbits, catching one after another—more rabbits than he could eat. Coyote thought, “I’ll team up with Eagle so I can have enough meat.” Coyote is always up to something.

“Friend,” Coyote said to Eagle, “we should hunt together. Two can catch more than one.”

“Why not?” Eagle said, and so they began to hunt in partnership. Eagle caught many rabbits, but all Coyote caught was some little bugs.

At this time the world was still dark; the sun and moon had not yet been put in the sky. “Friend,” Coyote said to Eagle, “no wonder I can’t catch anything; I can’t see. Do you know where we can get some light?”

“You’re right, friend, there should be some light,” Eagle said. “I think there’s a little toward the west. Let’s try and find it.”

And so they went looking for the sun and moon. They came to a big river, which Eagle flew over. Coyote swam, and swallowed so much water that he almost drowned. He crawled out with his fur full of mud, and Eagle asked, “Why don’t you fly like me?”

“You have wings, I just have hair,” Coyote said. “I can’t fly without feathers.”



At last they came to a pueblo, where the Kachinas happened to be dancing. The people invited Eagle and Coyote to sit down and have something to eat while they watched the sacred dances. Seeing the power of the Kachinas, Eagle said, "I believe these are the people who have light."

Coyote, who had been looking all around, pointed out two boxes, one large and one small, that the people opened whenever they wanted light. To produce a lot of light, they opened the lid of the big box, which contained the sun. For less light they opened the small box, which held the moon. Coyote nudged Eagle. "Friend, did you see that? They have all the light we need in the big box. Let's steal it."

"You always want to steal and rob. I say we should just borrow it."

"They won't lend it to us."

"You may be right," said Eagle. "Let's wait till they finish dancing and then steal it."

After a while the Kachinas went home to sleep, and Eagle scooped up the large box and flew off. Coyote ran along trying to keep up, panting, his tongue hanging out. Soon he yelled up to Eagle, "Ho, friend, let me carry the box a little way."

"No, no," said Eagle. "you never do anything right."

He flew on, and Coyote ran after him. After a while Coyote shouted again: "Friend, you're my chief, and it's not right for you to carry the box. People will call me lazy. Let me have it."

"No, no, you always mess everything up." And Eagle flew on and Coyote ran along.

So it went for a stretch, and then Coyote started again.

"Ho, friend, it isn't right for you to do this. What will people think of you and me?"

"I don't care what people think. I'm going to carry this box."

Again Eagle flew on and again Coyote ran after him. Finally Coyote begged for the fourth time: "Let me carry it. You're the chief, and I'm just Coyote. Let me carry it."

Eagle couldn't stand any more pestering. Also, Coyote had asked him four times, and if someone asks four times, you better give him what he wants. Eagle said, "Since you won't let up on me, go ahead and carry the box for a while. But promise not to open it."

"Oh, sure, oh yes, I promise." They went on as before, but now Coyote had the box. Soon Eagle was far ahead, and Coyote lagged behind a hill where Eagle couldn't see him. "I wonder what the light looks like, inside there," he said to himself. "Why shouldn't I take a peek? Probably there's something extra in the box, something good that Eagle wants to keep to himself."

And Coyote opened the lid. Now, not only was the sun inside, but the moon also. Eagle had put them both together, thinking that it would be easier to carry one box than two.

As soon as Coyote opened the lid, the moon escaped, flying high into the sky. At once all the plants shriveled up and turned brown. Just as quickly, all the leaves fell off the trees, and it was winter. Trying to catch the moon and put it back in the box, Coyote ran in pursuit as it skipped away from him. Meanwhile the sun flew out and rose into the sky. It drifted far away, and the peaches, squashes, and melons shriveled up with cold.

Eagle turned and flew back to see what had delayed Coyote. "You fool! Look what you've done!" he said. "You let the sun and moon escape, and now it's cold." Indeed, it began to snow, and Coyote shivered. "Now your teeth are chattering," Eagle said, "and it's your fault that cold has come into the world."

It's true. If it weren't for Coyote's curiosity and mischief-making, we wouldn't have winter; we could enjoy summer all the time.

EXERCISE

What values are being illustrated in the story?

For individuals, values have the following characteristics:

- > They are the social principles, goals, or standards held or accepted by us.
- > They help guide us in everything we do so that we remain grounded.
- > They help link us to our past.
- > They help create our future.
- > They are strengthened and tested through decisions every day.

For tribal peoples, values have been preserved and strengthened through the generations.

EXERCISE

What are some examples of tribal values?

What are the core values of your tribe?

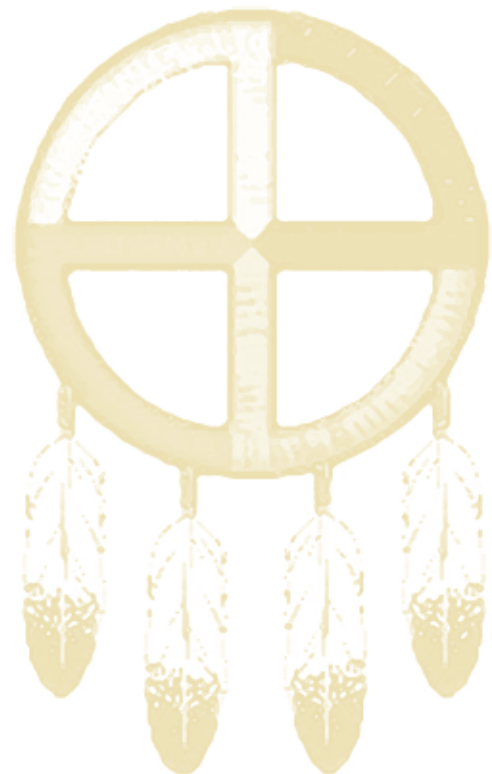


- > Lakota's seven core values: respect, honor, responsibility, wisdom, fortitude, courage, and generosity.
- > Anishinaabe's Teachings of the Seven Grandfathers: wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility, and truth.
- > For a tribal leader, values can play the following roles:
 - They help you to honor the past and protect the future.
 - They help you to lead effectively.
 - They help you make good decisions to serve your tribe.

How do values apply to research?

Values can apply to research in several ways:

- > They serve as important guides as you navigate through today's complex research world.
- > They serve as guides in choosing the kinds of research that will serve your tribe's needs.
- > They provide the foundation for the research project.
- > They give stability and direction while making uncertain or complicated decisions.
- > They help to set the terms of partnership between Native communities and their research collaborators. (For example, the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment has written a research protocol describing the Akwesasne Mohawk values that should guide all research conducted in their community. In Module 3, you will learn more about the Akwesasne research protocol.



A proposal:

These are five values that we consider core for tribes in conducting research:

1. Indigenous knowledge is valid and should be valued.

2. Research is not culturally neutral.

3. Responsible stewardship includes the task of learning how to interpret and understand data and research.

4. Tribes must exercise sovereignty when conducting research and managing data.

5. Research must benefit Native people.

- > You are likely to have additional personal and tribal values to consider when making research decisions.
- > Your values may look different from the five core values proposed above.
- > The important point is that you use a set of tribal values to guide you as you make real-life decisions about conducting research that will affect the well-being of your community.

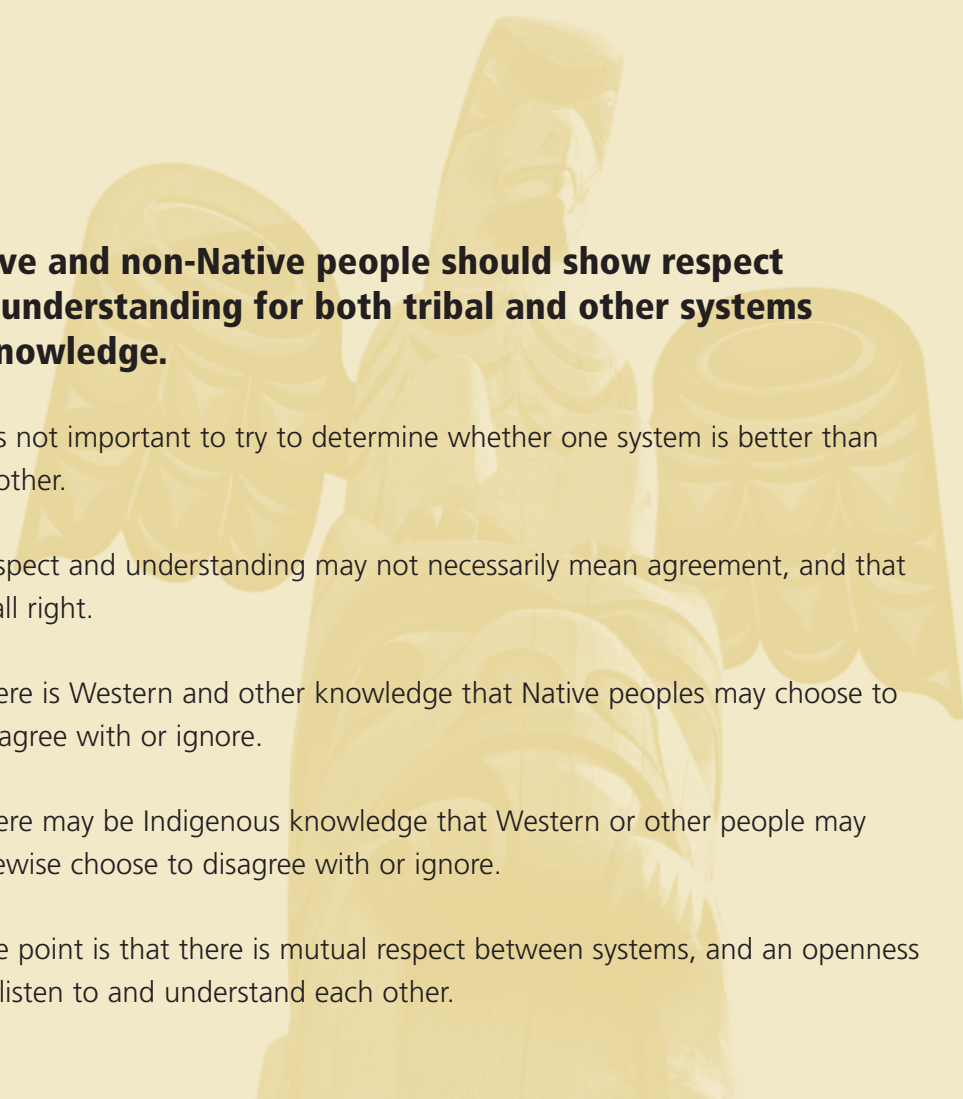
The Value and Validity of Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge is:

- > as old as Indian cultures
- > based on the collective wisdom of ancestors
- > built through careful observation and experiences of natural patterns of life
- > learned, transmitted, and retained in the telling of stories
- > complex, inter-related, and based on diverse conditions
- > closely linked with cultural views of the world

Indigenous knowledge is of equal weight and value as Western knowledge. It cannot be compromised but can be expanded.

- > Indigenous and Western knowledge have a long history of borrowing from and sharing with each other.
- > Tribal peoples have adapted the results of Western knowledge when it is useful. Examples: firearms or modern trucks and boats.
- > Western society has also eagerly used Indigenous knowledge. Examples: Most modern food sources and medicines have Indigenous origins.



Native and non-Native people should show respect and understanding for both tribal and other systems of knowledge.

- > It is not important to try to determine whether one system is better than another.
- > Respect and understanding may not necessarily mean agreement, and that is all right.
- > There is Western and other knowledge that Native peoples may choose to disagree with or ignore.
- > There may be Indigenous knowledge that Western or other people may likewise choose to disagree with or ignore.
- > The point is that there is mutual respect between systems, and an openness to listen to and understand each other.

EXERCISE

What are some examples of Indigenous knowledge that Western society has adopted, as well as examples of Western knowledge that tribal societies have adopted?

The Cultural Aspects of Research

“Culture matters.” It is the set of beliefs, customs, experiences, and social ways of behaving.

- > *Culture* provides us with a lens to see the world—sometimes called a *worldview*.
- > Everything that involves people involves culture. It’s what defines us as social beings.
- > People can look at the same object and see two completely different things.
 - “When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail.”
 - If you were a hammer, everything in the world would look like a nail.
- > People can hear the same sound and come to two different conclusions about its meaning.
- > Groups can travel different paths yet end up at the same place. Groups can also start in the same place and end up very far apart.

Much misunderstanding and conflict arises from people with different cultural worldviews not respecting cultural differences.

- > They may disagree on the solution, as well as on the problem.
- > What happens when the hammer and the crowbar see a nail sticking out of the wood? The hammer sees a nail that needs driving in, while the crowbar sees a nail that needs to be pulled out.

Research is not culturally neutral. Research that is designed to not be influenced by culture has actually harmed Indigenous people.

- > There is a long history of Western research that has studied a single aspect of tribal life without regard to cultural context, rendering it basically useless to culturally rich tribal communities.
- > For example, many studies on diabetes in Native communities focus on a single cause, such as nutrition.
- > Yet if studies do not acknowledge the historical, emotional, spiritual, social, and economic relationships to food and well-being, they miss critical points of understanding and viable solutions.
- > Even more harmful, this type of research may result in creating programs that make matters worse.
- > When people talk about research without culture, they really mean research conducted under Western cultural standards.

EXERCISE

Give an example of how understanding culture would be critical to studying a tribal issue. Think of an issue in your tribe concerning health, the environment, housing, education, law and order, governance, and so on.

What impact does culture have on the issue?

How might research be inappropriate or even harmful if culture is not considered?

Including Culture in Research: Six Practical Tips

- ✓ Be open to using a variety of types of research questions.
- ✓ Realize that the answers or outcomes of research may mean different things to different people.
- ✓ Involve community members in the research process in a meaningful way.
- ✓ Use language that is accessible to the people—easy-to-understand and Native focused (when appropriate).
- ✓ Accept that outside researchers must learn and attempt to understand the tribal culture to be most effective.
- ✓ Use a broad, representative group of stakeholders to ensure that cultural considerations are well represented in the research.

Tribal Stewardship and Its Relationship to Research

- > *Stewardship* means acting responsibly to serve the needs of a community.
- > As a tribal leader, the stewardship responsibility regarding research is two-fold:
 - 1) to use research to enhance community well-being
 - 2) to protect the community from potentially harmful research.
- > Tribal communities face a variety of challenges and need carefully obtained information to help them answer questions.
- > For example, if your child were sick with an unknown illness, you would demand answers until you had the information to make the right decision for her health. In the same way, when your community needs help, you provide assistance as best as you can in order to fulfill your role as a tribal leader and steward.

As a tribal leader you...

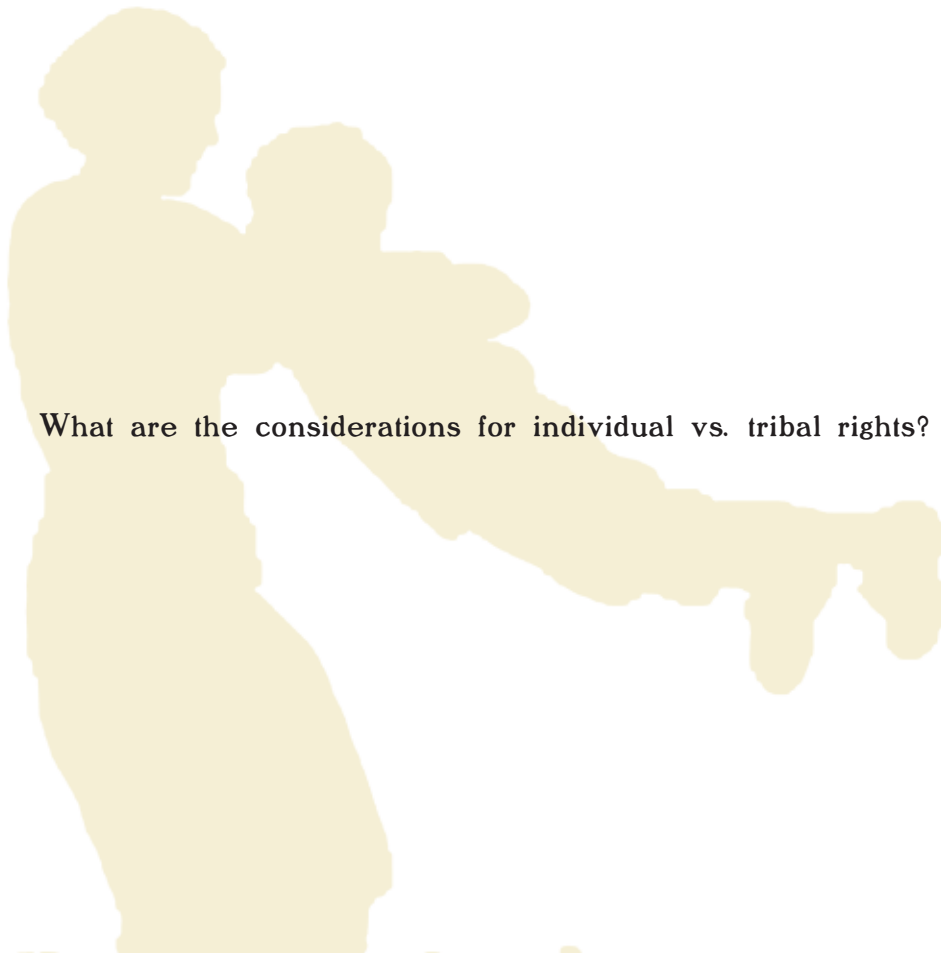
- > know and understand the needs of the community,
- > obtain reliable information that helps in your decision-making, policy development, and allocation of resources, and
- > know when and how outside research might represent both a benefit and a potential risk or threat.

EXERCISE

Read the provided articles and think about the following questions. What aspects of genetics research could help tribal communities?

Are there instances where genetics research could be harmful to your community?

What are the considerations for individual vs. tribal rights?



The Expression of Tribal Sovereignty in Research

- > Tribal sovereignty includes the right to regulate research. Unguided research relinquishes tribal power over the results and diminishes sovereignty.
- > The primary right and responsibility for holding and utilizing Indigenous knowledge lies with Indigenous peoples and their leaders. Allowing others to control research involving tribal peoples gives them the power to define tribal realities.
- > To be sovereign, tribal governments need to understand research from the perspective of both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing. Tribes must understand Western approaches to research regulation to know when research is inappropriate, unethical, or may exploit tribal people.
- > Exercising sovereignty is easier said than done. It requires infrastructure (laws, protocols, people, and resources). Tribes need to develop and implement institutions, organizations, regulations, and enforcement mechanisms to exercise their sovereign rights.

Discussion:

- What are some examples of how a tribe can exercise sovereignty in research?
- What laws, protocols, people, and resources would be required?
- What tribal institutions and organizations, regulations, and enforcement mechanisms might be needed?
- What is the responsibility of tribal leadership and others involved in the research?
- Where might jurisdictional issues arise?




The Benefits Research Can Offer to Native People

- > Tribal leaders should be clear about the nature of benefits of research to their communities and people.
- > Research must first, and most importantly, do no harm.
- > Research must lead to improving the lives of tribal peoples in specific and observable ways.
- > Research that takes data away from a tribal community without returning benefits, or that only returns a few benefits, is exploitive and often harmful.
- > Research that simply documents problems and fails to identify strengths or resources only compounds problems by reinforcing negative perceptions.
- > Research should not be allowed to be conducted solely for the benefit of researchers or to satisfy their curiosity or boost academic accomplishments.

Ethical research standards are necessary for research to be most beneficial to Native people. Basic ethical considerations include the following:

- > Does the research treat tribal peoples, their environment, and their customs with an ethical standard of conduct?
- > Does it protect participants from harm?
- > Does it keep information completely confidential?
- > Does it uphold the rights of participants while promoting justice and benefits to the people?



The researcher also has an ethical obligation to build the tribe's own research capacity, including:

- > Building capacity for reviewing, regulating, and conducting research.
- > Relying on tribal members as part of the paid research team:
 - increases the likelihood for success,
 - minimizes the potential risk, and
 - helps build the capacity of the tribe to conduct research in the future.
- > Conducting community-based participatory research that involves the community in planning and conducting the research (an excellent way to promote community capacity building).

Summary of the Five Core Research Values We Suggest

1. Indigenous knowledge is valid and should be valued.
2. Research is not culturally neutral.
3. Responsible stewardship includes the task of learning how to interpret and understand data and research.
4. Tribes must exercise sovereignty when conducting research and managing data.
5. Research must benefit Native people.

Each of above core values will be addressed throughout the modules of this research curriculum, which will consider the following topics:

> Managing the Designing and Planning of Research (Module 2)

> Using Ethics as a Guide for Managing Research (Module 3)

> Conducting Research In Partnership With Others (Module 4)

> Understanding Evaluation (Module 5)

EXERCISE

As a review of the core values, read the article provided and note where the suggested five core values are exhibited in the article.

References and Additional Resources

Anishinaabe's Seven Grandfathers' Teachings

The Little River Band of Ottawa Indians. (2007). *The seven grandfathers' teachings*. Retrieved February 3, 2009, from the Anishinaabemdaa Web site: <http://www.anishinaabemdaa.com/grandfathers.htm>

The Seven Grandfathers' Teachings are a set of values on human conduct towards others taught among the Anishinaabe. These include Nbwaakaawin (Wisdom), Zaagidwin (Love), Mnaadendimowin (Respect), Aakwade'ewin (Bravery), Gwekwaadiziwin (Honesty), Dbaadendiziwin (Humility), and Debwewin (Truth).

Lakota's Seven Core Cultural Values

The Lakota Project. (2009). *The Lakota Project Curriculum*. Retrieved January 29, 2009, from <http://www.lakotaproject.org/curriculum.htm>

Lakota's Seven Core Cultural Values are also described: respect, honor, responsibility, wisdom, fortitude, courage, and generosity." *The Lakota Project Curriculum* module represents the four stages of learning:

- Stage One: The First Generation—Child;
- Stage Two: The Second Generation—Teenager—First stage on Mentorship;
- Stage Three: The Third Generation—Adult—Mentor, Instructor; and
- Stage Four: The Fourth Generation—Elder—Instructor.

As individuals develop their use of the language and understanding of the culture, they move outward from the center of the module and are exposed to increased knowledge and language fluency.

Notes



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