

Study Design Considerations for Research *with* Indigenous Peoples in Canada

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Acknowledge

- Territorial Acknowledgement:

I acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional unceded territory of the Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet). This territory is covered by the “Treaties of Peace and Friendship” which Wolastoqiyik, Mi’kmaq and Passamaquoddy Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1726. The treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Wolastoqiyik title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.

Terminology

- Indigenous, Aboriginal, Native American
- First Nations, Metis, Inuit
 - Use specific tribal affiliation when known
 - Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet), Mi'kmaq (L'nu), and Passamaquoddy
- On-reserve versus off-reserve
- Status versus non-status

(AFN, n.d.; INAC, 2012; NAHO, 2012; Vowel, 2016)

Why is the approach important?

The word itself, 'research,' is probably one of the dirtiest words in the Indigenous world's vocabulary (Smith, 2012, p.1)

"We've been researched to death!" they protested (Castellano, 2004, p.98)

Native saying, "Researchers are like mosquitoes; they suck your blood and leave." (Cochran et al., 2008, p. 22)

Indigenous peoples "are the most researched in the world" (Aboriginal Research Institute, 1993)

Historical Context

- Eurocentrism
- Cultural exoticism
- Subjugating Indigenous peoples (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2013)
- Indian residential school nutrition experiments (Hackett, Abonyi, & Dyck, 2016; Macdonald, Stanwick, & Lynk, 2014; Mosby, 2013)

Current Context

Pathologizing Indigenous Peoples

- Indigenous peoples are a “problem” to be solved, requiring the assistance of “experts”
- Overstating the negative aspects of communities
- Blaming Indigenous peoples for their social & health outcomes
- Silent on historical and contemporary colonial context

(Castellano, 2004; Chilisa, 2012; Getty, 2010; Smith, 2012)

Decolonizing Research

Decolonization... does not mean and has not meant a total rejection of all theory or research or Western knowledge. Rather, it is about centring our concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes (Smith, 2012, p. 41).

Decolonizing Research

- Whose knowledge is being privileged?
- Colonial influence in knowledge paradigms
- Balancing power relationships
- Critical-Social Theory

Decolonizing Research

Indigenous peoples are increasingly asking the following critical questions of researchers:

1. Whose research is it?
2. Who owns it?
3. Whose interests does it serve?
4. Who will benefit from it?
5. Who has designed its questions and framed its scope?
6. Who will carry it out?
7. Who will write it up?
8. How will its results be dissemination? (Smith, 2012, p. 10)

Respect & Reciprocity

- Developing trusting relationships
- Respecting local protocols and customs
- Reporting back to the people (not parachuting)
- Sharing knowledge (dissemination)
- Relevancy of research topic
 - Did the research assist the community?
 - Could the community make sense of the research?

(Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012)

Ethical Frameworks

Chapter 9 of the TCPS (2014)

Article 9.1 Where the research is likely to affect the welfare of an Aboriginal community, or communities, to which prospective participants belong, researchers shall seek engagement with the relevant community.

Article 9.8 Researchers have an obligation to become informed about, and to respect, the relevant customs and codes of research practice that apply in the particular community or communities affected by their research. Inconsistencies between community custom and this Policy should be identified and addressed in advance of initiating the research, or as they arise.

Ethical Frameworks

OCAP Principles

Ownership

Refers to the relationship of a First Nations community to its cultural knowledge/data and collective rights to ownership of that information.

Control

The aspirations and rights of First Nations to maintain and regain control of all aspects of their lives and institutions, including research, data, and information.

Access

First Nations people must have access to information and data about themselves and their communities, regardless of where it is currently held.

Possession

Possession of data is a mechanism by which ownership can be asserted and protected.

Ethical Review

Locating local Indigenous research protocols.

- Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch
- New Brunswick Aboriginal Peoples Council
- Chief & Council and traditional authorities

CBCPAR Methods

Community-Based Collaborative Participatory Action Research is research that is “firmly rooted within the community that is affected by the issue being studied” (Pharris & Pavlish, 2014, p. 95)

- Engagement in all phases of the research process
- Engagement versus consultation
- Participant as co-researcher
- Attentive of context
- Photovoice, symbol-based reflection, sharing circles

(Chilisa, 2012; Lavalee, 2009)

Indigenous Research Methodologies

- Protects space for Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies
- Knowledge is relational (Chilisa, 2012)
- Research is Ceremony by Shawn Wilson (2008)
- Ancestral languages

Research with Indigenous peoples as a non-Indigenous researcher

- Locating self (critical reflexivity)
- Humility & authenticity
- Supporting self-determination
- Making space for Indigenous knowledges and methods
- Building capacity in communities
- Protecting Indigenous knowledge
 - Sacred knowledges
 - Cultural appropriation

(Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Castellano, 2004;
Getty, 2010; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012)

Parting Thoughts

An Elder who had opened the meeting spoke quietly from a corner of the room. "If we have been researched to death," he said, "maybe it's time we started researching ourselves back to life" (Castellano, 2004, p.98).

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