

Community Engagement 101

(Led by Marianne Falardeau-Côté, PhD, Allyson Menzies, PhD, and Gwyneth Anne MacMillan, PhD)



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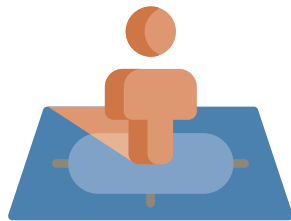
Module Overview

- Key terms and concepts related to working with Northern Indigenous communities
- Introduction to community collaborative research
- The importance of training early career researchers and students to participate in meaningful community engagement
- Calls to action for natural scientists working in community collaborative research

Module Summary

- Before engaging in community collaborative research, it is important to learn and understand the cultural and historical contexts of the Indigenous Peoples in Canada.
- Community collaborative research requires time and skills to build trust and relationships for genuine collaborative knowledge exchange and gain.
- Many early career researchers want to engage in community collaborative research but do not know how to start. Peer-run training opportunities can help fill this gap.
- Natural scientists should be respectful and aim to apply the Calls to Actions from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to their research process.

Introduction to Community Collaborative Research



Positionality is the social and political context that creates identity (e.g., ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and ability).

- It describes how your identity influences, and potentially biases, your understanding of, and outlook on the world.
- Other important related factors include geographical location and historical context, different ways of knowing and knowledge systems, and power dynamics.

Historical Context for Community Collaborative Research

- Indigenous Peoples** in Canada include First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. It is important to know who you're engaging and working with and the specifics of their cultures.
- Treaties and Land Claims** are agreements between the Canadian government and Indigenous Peoples outlining how to live peacefully together. Historically, not many have been upheld, and they have been heavily debated. It is important to respect and understand that when entering these spaces and communities that they have their own governance and way of doing things.

Historic Treaties were made as early as the 1700s and can be found on the [Government of Canada's website](#).

Modern Treaties are treaties created as early as 2018, and there are some territories that have yet to fall under a treaty. More information can be found on the [Government of Canada's website](#).

- Canada was built on the **colonization** of Indigenous Nations by European-settlers and the history is marked with systemic racism and genocide, including Residential Schools and the 60s Scoop. Research has often been used as a tool to colonize, and science was used to gatekeep knowledge.
- In recent years, there have been efforts for **reconciliation** through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and various calls to action.

Community Collaborative Research

- Community collaborative research' is an overarching term for approaches to research that involves engaging local communities and individuals in the research process. The goal is to share or co-generate knowledge to understand complex problems and bring change through policy. It includes a continuum of collaboration and related engagement activities, from informing, up to shared leadership with Indigenous partners.
- Many terms are used to define this kind of research, including 'participatory research'.
- Community collaborative research can result in new knowledge from research, enduring authentic relationships, and co-capacity.
- Community collaborative research requires strong time commitments and many skills that are not typically taught in academia. However, when researchers do dedicate time to engage and be present, they communicate, listen, and understand better. This can lead to building more trust and creating collaborative efforts for knowledge exchange and gain.
- Researchers should make an effort to be aware of the local context at a bare minimum.

Continuum of Collaboration

The continuum of collaboration can range anywhere from having stakeholders as participants, to being partners in the research process.



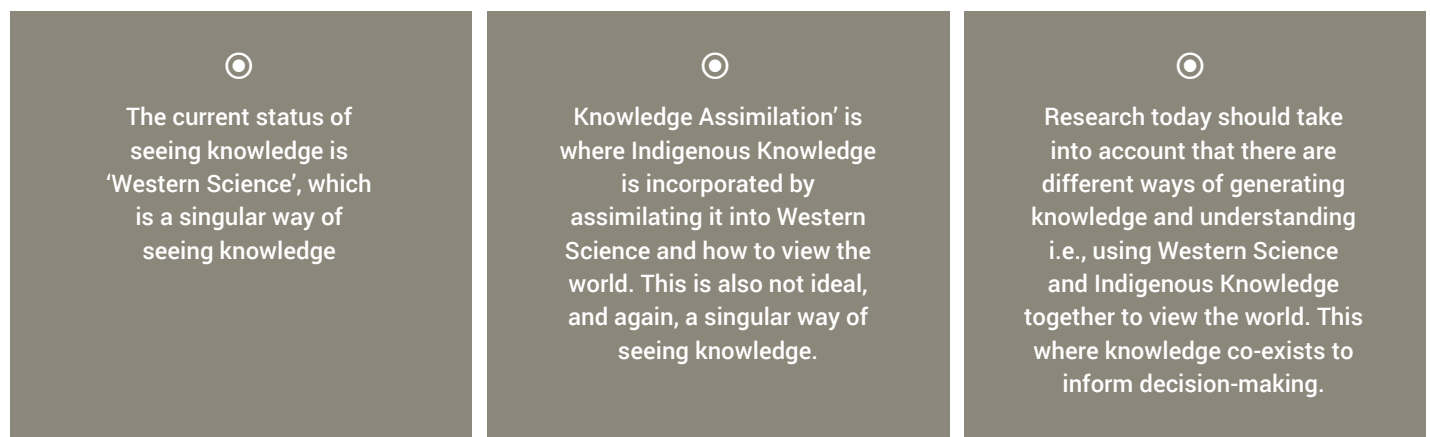
Some considerations to keep in mind:

- Sometimes communities will experience fatigue if there is too much work or too many projects. There can be a lack of capacity to administer research locally.
- Tailor collaboration based on what is possible in the context of the project, depending on time and resources.

(Adapted from [Principles of Community Engagement Second Edition](#))

Flow of Knowledge

'Two-Eyed Seeing' is an approach to learning by seeing the strengths of Indigenous knowledge in one eye and mainstream knowledge with the other eye and combining them together to benefit everyone.



Community Collaborative Research Student Training

- There is a strong desire to engage in community collaborative research, but many early career researchers do not feel like they have the tools to succeed.
- Early career researchers are faced with a number of barriers when it comes to community collaborative research, including:

Lack of training leaves early career researchers to figure things out by trial-or-error, and depending on the community's history, this may not be optimal.

Projects may be a part of larger research programs, so it can be harder to accommodate community requests, such as owning the data.

Short time-span of projects may not allow for enough time to build trust and relationships with the communities.

Budget constraints may include not having enough to fund translators.

- Having peer-run training sessions for early career and student researchers can help fill these gaps, but it is important to pair this with other systemic changes at the institution level.

Calls to Action for Natural Scientists

In a response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Wong et al. (2020) published [“10 calls to action to natural scientists working in Canada”](#). Reconciliation includes how we conduct research. It means including and respecting Indigenous communities, rights, and knowledge for better collaboration and research outcomes. Below, the Calls to Action have been summarized into four broader categories. For more information, please see the original source.

Learn to Stay Aware

- (Call 1)** We call on natural scientists to understand the socio-political landscape around their research sites.
- (Call 7)** We call upon natural scientists and their students to take a course on Indigenous history and rights.

Foster Knowledge Co-Production

- (Call 2)** We call on natural scientists to recognize that generating knowledge about the land is a goal shared with Indigenous peoples and seek meaningful relationships and possible collaboration for better outcomes for all involved.
- (Call 3)** We call on natural scientists to enable knowledge sharing and knowledge co-production.

Practical Applications

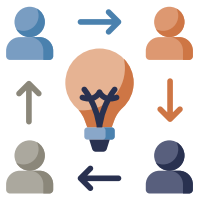
- (Call 4)** We call on natural scientists studying animals to seek out advice from Elders for respectful ways of handling animals.
- (Call 5)** We call upon natural scientists to provide meaningful opportunities for Indigenous community members, particularly youth, to experience and participate in science.
- (Call 6)** To decolonize the landscape, we call on natural scientists to incorporate Indigenous place names as permitted.

Practical Applications

8 (Call 8) We call on funding bodies to change approaches to funding.

9 (Call 9) We call on editors of all scientific journals to recognize that publication of research on Indigenous Knowledge and cultural resources require review and permission from the perspective Indigenous communities.

10 (Call 10) We call on all natural scientists and postsecondary research institutions to develop a new vision for conducting natural science: fundamentally mainstreaming reconciliation in all aspects of the scientific endeavor, from formulation to completion.



For more information and resources, there is a [crowd-sourced document](#) for early-career researchers who are conducting participatory and collaborative research.



Additional Reading(s):

- [Settling on a Name: Names for non-Indigenous Canadians](#) by âpihtawikosisân
- [Highlighting the potential of peer-led workshops in training early-career researchers for conducting research with Indigenous communities](#) by MacMillan et al. (2019)
- [Working with northern communities to build collaborative research partnerships: perspectives from early career researchers](#) by Tondu et al. (2014)
- [Toward increased engagement between academic and indigenous community partners in ecological research](#) by Adams et al. (2014)
- [“Two-Eyed Seeing”: An Indigenous framework to transform fisheries research and management](#) by Reid et al. (2020)
- [Involvement of local Indigenous peoples in Arctic research – expectations, needs and challenges perceived by early career researchers](#) by Sjöberg et al. (2018)
- [MacMillan and Falardeau et al., 2019, Highlighting the potential of peer-led workshops in training early-career researchers for conducting research with Indigenous communities](#) by MacMillan et al. (2019)

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