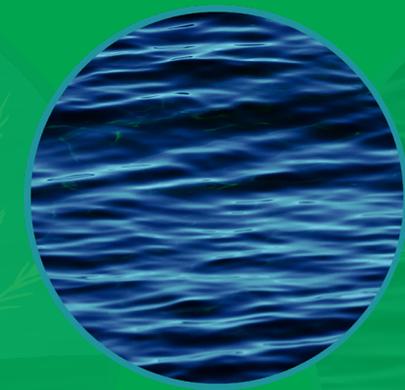


RECIPROCAL RESEARCH

A Guidebook to Centering Community in Partnerships with Indigenous Nations



Christie Poitra, Angela Kolonich, Ellie Mitchell, Emily Proctor, Antoinette Shirley, Aimee Baier, and Elizabeth LaPensée





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GRATITUDE

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of Michigan State University Native American Institute (NAI). As one of only a handful of university institutes across the country with a Native community-driven mission, we want to recognize the decades of Native, community and ally leadership that have worked tirelessly to further NAI.

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We are thankful for the use of Dr. Elizabeth LaPensée's artwork throughout this guide.



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Modifications YES, Commercial use NO, Sharing required YES



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The authors would like to acknowledge that “Michigan State University occupies the ancestral, traditional, and contemporary Lands of the Anishinaabeg – the Three Fires Confederacy of Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi peoples. The University resides on Land ceded in the 1819 Treaty of Saginaw. We recognize that settler and Indigenous signatories understood the terms of the treaties in starkly different terms. According to a map within the University archive, Anishinaabeg maintained an ‘Indian Encampment’ south of the Red Cedar River when classes were first held at the University (then known as Michigan Agricultural College) on May 13, 1857.

As one of the first Land Grant colleges, Michigan State University is a beneficiary of Land allotted through the passing of the Morrill Act in 1862. The University finds pride in calling itself ‘The Nation’s Pioneer Land Grant College,’ a term we find highly problematic and recommend that it no longer be used. The Morrill Act, which enabled the Land Grant system, was passed in the same year as both the Homestead Act—granting 160 acres to individual settlers who ‘improved’ and farmed land in the West—and the largest mass hanging in the history of the United States, the state-sanctioned murder of 38 Dakota. We understand that there is an indelible relationship between the creation of Land Grant institutions, the simultaneous and ongoing expropriation of Indigenous Lands, and the governmentally-coordinated genocide against Indigenous peoples. By recognizing the ways that settler-colonial institutions benefit from these interconnected histories, we work to hold the University accountable.

In American Indian and Indigenous Studies, we recognize, support, and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan’s 12 federally-recognized Indian nations (Bay Mills Indian Community, Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Hannahville Indian Community, Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Lac Vieux Desert Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Indians, Little River Band of Ottawa Indians, Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians, Match-e-be-nash-she-wish Band of Pottawatomi Indians, Nottawaseppi Huron Band of the Potawatomi, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians, Saginaw Chippewa Indian Tribe, and Sault Ste. Marie

Tribe of Chippewa Indians), as well as other Indigenous people and historic tribes in Michigan (Burt Lake Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, Grand River Bands of Ottawa Indians, Mackinac Band of Chippewa and Ottawa Indians, and Swan Creek Black River Confederated Ojibwa Tribes), across Turtle Island, and throughout the Fourth World.

We acknowledge the real ways that the State of Michigan, Michigan State University, and residents of this Land have benefitted from the forced and systematic removal of Anishinaabeg and other Indigenous peoples from Michigan, particularly during the Indian Removal period of the 19th century. We affirm and acknowledge the Burt Lake Band, who were literally burned from their houses in 1900. We also acknowledge the Métis community who were forced from their community on Bootaaganini-minis (Drummond Island), when the border was drawn between the U.S. and Canada. Likewise, we recognize that parts of what is now Michigan includes Land within the traditional Homelands of the Miami, Meskwaki, Sauk, Kickapoo, Menominee, and other Indigenous nations.

We collectively understand that offering Land Acknowledgements or Land Recognitions do not absolve settler-colonial privilege or diminish colonial structures of violence, at either the individual or institutional level. We recognize that Land Acknowledgements must be preceded and followed with ongoing and unwavering commitments to American Indian and Indigenous Nations and communities. In AIIIS, we push Michigan State University to recruit, retain, and support American Indian and Indigenous students, faculty, and staff. Moreover, we affirm that Michigan State University must support Indigenous communities and nations in Michigan, as well as throughout Turtle Island, and across the Fourth World. We recognize, support, and advocate for the sovereignty of Michigan’s 12 federally-recognized Indian nations, for historic Indigenous communities in Michigan, for Indigenous individuals and communities who live here now, and for those who were forcibly removed from their Homelands. We affirm Indigenous sovereignty and hold Michigan State University accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.” (MSU American Indian and Indigenous Studies., 2018). To learn more about this Land Acknowledgement, please visit: <http://aisp.msu.edu/about/land/>



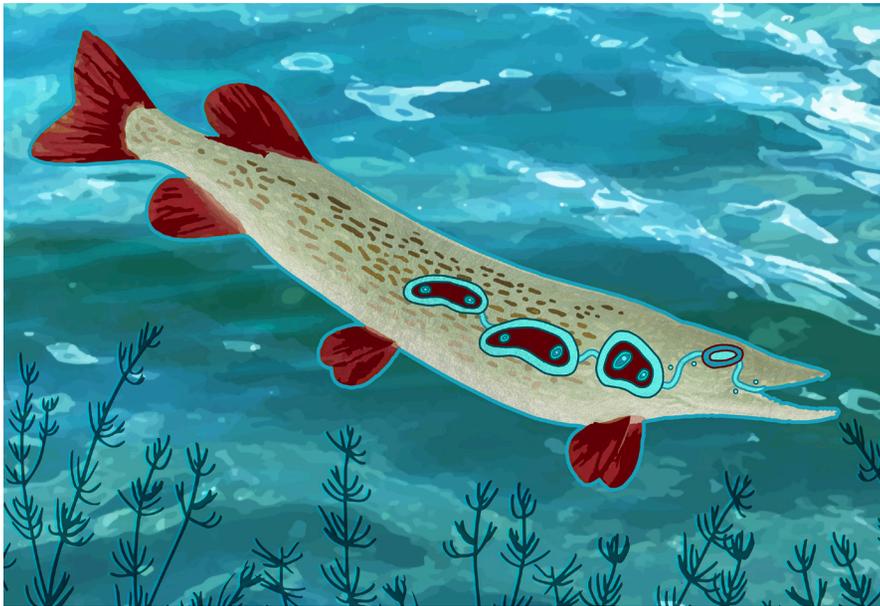
AUTHORS

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Angela Kolonich, Ph.D. is an Academic Specialist in the CREATE for STEM Institute at Michigan State University, and serves as the Director of Professional Learning for the NextGen PBL Initiative. She is also an affiliate faculty member of the American Indian and Indigenous Studies program. Dr. Kolonich is Fish Clan, of mixed settler/Indigenous ancestry, and connected at the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa where her spouse is a tribal member. She has over 16 years of experience teaching and working in urban schools, including the Lansing School District, the Detroit Public Schools Community District, and the Los Angeles Unified School District. In her current role, Dr. Kolonich develops and facilitates teacher professional learning programs supporting the development of equitable science learning environments, and maintains a research focus on science teacher learning. Dr. Kolonich also serves as a board member for Giitigan, an Anishinaabe garden in Lansing, MI.



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Emily Proctor, MSW, BASW, is Eagle Clan, Anishinaabe, and a citizen of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians (LTBB), Harbor Springs, Michigan. She serves as a Tribal Extension Educator in the Community, Food & Environment Institute for Michigan State University Extension where she engages in educational programming with Michigan Tribal Nations, Tribal Communities, Tribal Colleges, non-tribal governments, schools and community organizations. Her home office is located in her Tribal Nations homelands of Harbor Springs. As the Tribal Extension Educator, her projects include the development, delivery, and evaluation of educational programs in the areas of Tribal Governance, Leadership, Community Engagement, and Diversity. She is currently a Tribal Council Member for LTBB. She has also worked as a Child Protective Services Worker, as an associate Child Welfare Commissioner, an associate Natural Resources Commissioner and was elected three times to be the Speaker of the Annual Community Meeting for her Tribal Nation. She enjoys making quilts as a way to contribute to her community. She earned her degrees from Michigan State University in the School of Social Work.

Elizabeth LaPensée, Ph.D. is an award-winning designer, writer, artist, and researcher who creates and studies Indigenous-led media, such as games and comics. She is Anishinaabe with family from Bay Mills, Métis, and Irish. Since 2006, she has run game making workshops with Indigenous community partners at their request with the hope of building capacity for Indigenous-led game development. Her games, such as *When Rivers Were Trails*, *Thunderbird Strike*, and *Honour Water*, exemplify collaboration with Indigenous elders, storytellers, and fluent language speakers. She is an Assistant Professor of Media & Information and Writing, Rhetoric & American Cultures at Michigan State University and a 2018 Guggenheim Fellow.

Antoinette Shirley is a doctoral student at Michigan State University in the Department of Forestry. She is of Mexican, Native and White descent. She is an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation and has worked with the tribe on various research projects related to culturally important animal species. Her research area of interest is Indigenous involvement in forest management. She has worked with the Navajo Nation in the Southwest, building her dissertation design. She is also a graduate research assistant in the Native American Institute at Michigan State University where she assists with programming and research, and is a member of Michigan State's Indigenous Graduate Student Collective.

Aimee Baier (Anishinaabe) is a Graduate Research Assistant in the Applied Forest and Wildlife Ecology Laboratory in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife at Michigan State University. In collaboration with the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians Natural Resources Department, she is the lead researcher of two initiatives investigating habitat relationships of the culturally important species, waboose (snowshoe hare), to inform tribal wildlife management. She has worked for multiple conservation agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, and Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians Natural Resources Department. She currently serves as a Graduate Fellow in the Native American Institute at Michigan State University, where she supports programming and research.



TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY & RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS

Tribal Nations are sovereign political entities at the service of their communities. To work with tribal communities inherently calls for collaboration with the tribal governmental structures. We use government and community interchangeably throughout this text. It is important to think of tribes as sovereign Nation States with an inherent interest and right to approve, or disapprove, research within the context of their community (e.g., territories, citizens and community knowledges). The practices for developing a research partnership are:

- Prior to proposing a new partnership, attend or volunteer at community events;
- Prior to meeting with the community, take the time to leverage university libraries and online resources to learn about the community (e.g., correct pronunciation of tribal names, current community programming and partnerships, territories, government, economy, history, etc.);
- Be prepared to introduce yourself (e.g., who you are, where are you from, how you came to be interested in a research partnership with this particular community);

- Start the first meeting by asking the community what their needs are and if you can assist with their goals. Be flexible and adaptive to be responsive to the needs the community has shared. Remember that Indigenous communities are not homogenous groups and that you may receive a wide range of responses and ideas;
- Assemble a diverse project leadership team that includes colleagues with expertise in collaborating with tribal communities;
- Ask how the community vets research partnerships. Some tribes have a research review board. In other cases, research requests are reviewed and approved by the tribal council. A tribe may also request to develop a Memorandum of Understanding between the university and tribe around issues of research funding, data collection and data sharing. Although there may be diverse processes for gaining approval, the approval will be from a body of people elected to represent the tribe—not an individual tribal citizen. Namely, one person cannot speak for their entire community.
- Commit to consistently collaborating and communicating with tribes before the research begins, during the project, and after the research is completed;
- Include tribal representative in leadership roles on the research project (e.g., Co-PI status);
- Equitably compensate the tribal community and citizens helping with the project for their time, labor and expertise;
- Use of data collected from the project should be discussed with the community throughout the project to limit publications that are inaccurate, harmful or biased about the community.



ESTABLISHING PARAMETERS OF THE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIP

The following questions should be used to reflect on the ways your research impacts the community you are seeking to partner with. These questions may also be used to enhance discussions with potential community partners.

Individual Reflection Questions

- What relationship do I currently have with this tribal government and the community (e.g., boards, organizations, etc.)?
- Have I sought insight from groups within the community who may be underrepresented in the tribal government?
- What do I currently know about the tribal government leadership, history, and economy of this community?
- How have I made space for tribal community members to join initiatives that I am involved in?
- How have I begun to address biases that I may bring with me into this relationship?
- How have I taken a stand to be more inclusive in my community, work, and life?
- When I am challenged with a difficult situation, what does coming from a place of curiosity look like?

Reflection Questions to Discuss with the Community

- How does the proposed research align with the mission, vision, and goals of the partner tribe?
- What is the potential for this work to replicate, or conflict with current efforts or initiatives of the tribe?
- How will the proposed research benefit the partner tribe?

Does the partner tribe also consider project outcomes to be a substantial benefit to their community?

- What are the specific ways that I have provided space for the community to shape the proposal and project, to ensure that it speaks to their unique contexts and needs? What more can be done to ensure deep community involvement?
- Does the tribal government consent to this research partnership? Do I have the appropriate approvals from relevant leadership for this effort?
- Could this project benefit from a community advocate to support vulnerable populations?
- How will data be collected, stored, used, shared and eventually destroyed after the project is complete? Who has access to data, and how is it accessed?
- What concerns and questions does the tribe have?
- What is appropriate, equitable compensation for community members time, expertise and labor?
- What actions have I taken to provide the tribe a meaningful voice and leadership opportunities for this effort?

NOTES



Applying Learned Knowledge

This section provides several hypothetical research projects using fictional communities, institutions, grant initiatives and programs. With the content of the guide in mind, some of these projects missed the mark in establishing a reciprocal partnership. Please review each scenario and reflect on how these projects can be more centered on community reciprocity through input, consent and participation.

SCENARIO 1: STEM EDUCATION PATHWAYS RESEARCH

The **Inclusive Forestry Initiative (IFI)** proposal will use a series of afterschool and field research education interventions to attract more Native students from the River Pine Tribe into the undergraduate forestry program at Golden Meadow University. IFI will implement a cohort of pre-college forestry field experiences for Native high school students from River Pine Tribal High School—an on-reservation charter school managed by Council. Students will participate in the experience during their junior and senior years. Senior students will be provided additional workshops to develop their personal statements and submit their applications to Golden Meadow University as undergraduate students in Forestry. The proposed program will rely heavily on survey, observational and interview data from River Pine youth participating in the program. Since much of the programming will occur after school, IFI will also need regular access to space within the reservation high school.

The Principal Investigator (PI) is passionate about STEM education equity and has done significant work on science education access in rural communities. Unfortunately, the PI has little experience working with Native communities and is not currently connected to River Pine. The PI has had a couple introductory meetings with the River Pine Education Director



about the proposal. The proposal deadline is fast approaching. The PI is anxious to submit for the funding, and believes the program would greatly benefit River Pine citizens. Unfortunately, the Education Director has not been able to get on Council's agenda to review the IFI proposal. In a last ditch effort, the PI reaches out to an off-reservation community center that regularly collaborates with the tribe on youth programming. The PI is able to obtain a letter of support from a parent who is a River Pine citizen. The parent is employed part time at the center and sits on several River Pine community boards related to food sovereignty. The PI submits the proposal to the funding agency.

Reflection Questions

Please review and reflect on the questions below according to the information presented in Scenario 1.

- Describe the ways that the PI could have been more responsive to the needs of River Pine Tribe.
- Who are the community stakeholders, and how is each stakeholder impacted by this proposal?
- What assumptions does this proposal make about community access to resources? How can the PI avoid this in the future?
- How does this project function as a reciprocal research partnership? In what ways could this proposal be revised to develop a stronger partnership between the PI and River Pine?
- What potential setbacks might arise should the project get funded as is?
- How does this work benefit the River Pine community? What group of people within the River Pine community will benefit the most?

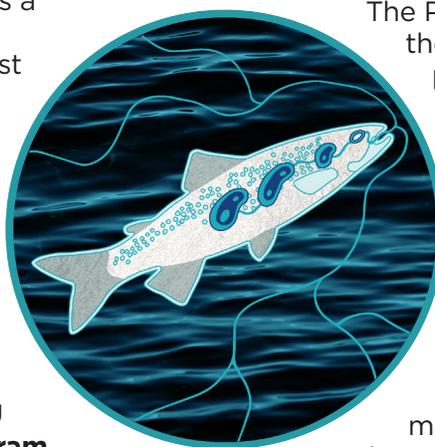


SCENARIO 2: ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RESEARCH

Hudson Lake is a significant harvesting site for the River Pine community. The lake is located on the River Pine reservation, and near an off-reservation paper mill. The lake trout is a food staple for the community and significant cultural practices are tied to the health of the lake. Over the last 15 years, the community has noticed environmental changes in the lake—resulting in River Pine Council investing in several environmental initiatives and data collection efforts. River Pine is excited to expand lake health efforts through a research partnership with a university.

Faculty from Golden Meadow University (GMU) and West Tidal University (WTU) reach out to River Pine about a grant opportunity around water health. After several months of planning with River Pine, GMU and WTU faculty develop the **Lake Trout Health Program** (LTHP) proposal. The five-year collaborative proposal relies on River Pine Tribe to gather trout, soil and water samples from Hudson Lake. The LTHP proposal plans for GMU and WTU to regularly collect soil and water samples from the lake. The research will also monitor trout populations through a catch-and-release GPS tagging effort and tissue samples. This data about the environment will be coupled with elder expertise about changing harvesting practices and sites over time. Approximately eight elders will be asked to hike with GMU and WTU faculty to harvesting sites on the lake and will be interviewed about those sites. The tour and interview will take about five hours. The budget will provide meals during the tour and interviews.

The funding agency limits the number of Principal Investigators (PI) and Co-Principal Investigators (CO-PI), resulting in only GMU and WTU faculty being formally represented on the proposal. However, the PI has dedicated funds for a part-time coordinator position for River Pine outreach. Given the tribe's long standing work on Hudson Lake health, the Council is concerned a part



time position is not enough to cover the work described in the proposal. To help address these concerns, the PI reaches out to a newly hired Assistant Professor in Native American Studies to consult on the project. Unfortunately the cost of course buy-outs and travel for the PI and CO-PI constricts the budget to the point the project does not have funds to pay the Assistant Professor.

The PI feels, even without pay, it is a great experience for the junior faculty to be named in such a significant proposal.

The qualitative and quantitative data will be overlaid with GPS mapping to create a visual narrative of the changes of Hudson Lake over time. The data will be turned into a number of academic articles and presentations for academic conferences. Representatives of River Pine Council are concerned about harvesting sites being published in academic articles. The PI assures representatives there will not be an issue moving forward with the GPS mapping plan as is. The proposal is submitted with a letter of support from the River Pine Council.

Reflection Questions

Please review and reflect on the questions below according to the information presented in Scenario 2.

- What are the community concerns raised, and how did the PI address these concerns? What else could the PI have done to better address each concern?
- How is the River Pine community represented in the leadership of the proposal?
- How will the community benefit from the proposed research? Does the proposed research align with the initiatives and values of the community?
- How are the people involved equitably compensated for their time, expertise and labor? What additional steps can be taken to ensure equitable compensation?

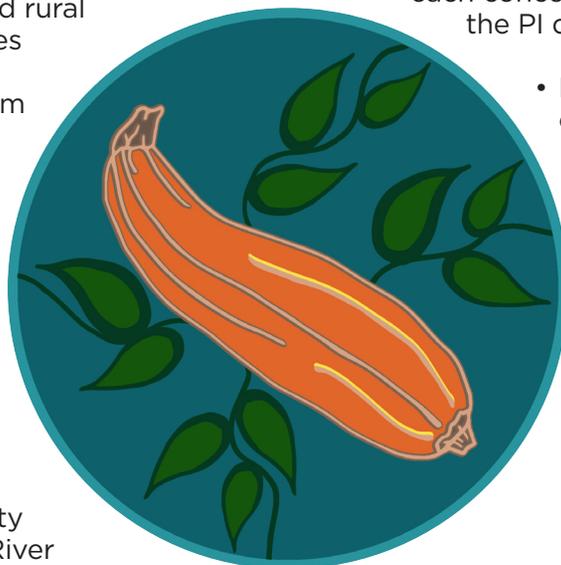


SCENARIO 3: COMMUNITY GARDENING & FOOD SOVEREIGNTY RESEARCH

The **River Pine Food Sovereignty Initiative** (RPFSI) proposal is focused on bringing educational programming to the River Pine tribe around community gardening. The PI and Co-PIs are considered prominent scholars in the field of organic gardening in urban community spaces. Although they do not have any experience collaborating with Native and rural communities, they feel there are a lot of similarities between urban and reservation contexts. The PI scheduled an introductory meeting with a Program Coordinator working with a grant about healthy living at River Pine.

Leading up to the meeting, the PI shares a copy of the drafted proposal (which is a proposal resubmission, originally written for a rural community in mind). During the meeting, the Program Coordinator expresses interest in the proposal, but comments that they are in a grant-funded position that concludes at the end of the fiscal year. The Program Coordinator also shares that the tribe is in the process of implementing several initiatives around community gardening, and suggests the PI reach out to the River Pine Food Sovereignty Board (which represents citizens appointed by Council).

Although the PI is unable to get on the Board's schedule before the grant deadline, the PI submits the proposal. Upon notification of the grant award from the funding agency, the PI reaches out to the Program Coordinator, only to find they no longer work for the tribe. Soon after, the PI is able to meet with the River Pine Food Sovereignty Board. During the meeting, the PI learns River Pine has received its own funding to develop a community garden program. The community does not wish to participate in the RPFSI project because they feel there is too much replication with programming they are already doing.



Reflection Questions

Please review and reflect on the questions below according to the information presented in Scenario 3.

- Describe how the research partnership with River Pine could be improved.
- What were the River Pine communities' concerns, and was each concern adequately addressed by the PI? What could the PI do to better address each concern?
- How does this proposal align with the River Pine community goals?
 - How will the River Pine community benefit from the proposed research?
 - Is the community represented in the leadership of the proposal?



SCENARIO 4: SUPPORTING CHANGE BY CONCLUDING A PROJECT

For the last 10 years, the **Dune Grass Preservation Initiative** (DGPI) has been operating on the River Pine reservation. DGPI is a collaboration between Golden Meadow University and the River Pine Tribe. The need for the project is a result of off-reservation recreational activities impacting sand dune health near the reservation. Recreational activities, including, hiking, the use of quads, horseback riding and other sporting activities erodes the sand dunes, and uproots dune grasses that protect dunes from wind damage. The grasses are critical in protecting the structural integrity of the sand dunes, and also serve as a nesting area for swallows. Dunegrasses are also culturally significant for the River Pine community. Each year, River Pine harvests and dries the grasses for basket weaving.

Through multiple grants, representatives from Golden Meadow University and the River Pine Natural Resources Department have collected data to understand the changing landscape, and ways to promote dune grass health. Project PIs and the Department used data to co-develop a series of projections about future grass health based on various climate scenarios. The Department is requesting additional funding from the River Pine tribal council to expand DGPI efforts. Since the most recent grant is ending, the Council requested that the Department present the project findings at a public tribal council meeting. Leading up to the tribal council meeting, the Department asked the PI and Co-PIs to develop a presentation for the broader River Pine community. Although this request was not part of the original grant deliverables, the PI sees this request as an important part of fostering a reciprocal partnership with River Pine.



Reflection Questions

- Please review and reflect on the questions below according to the information presented in Scenario 4.
- Imagining yourself as the PI, how might you help the department with preparing for the council meeting?
- What are some deliverables you think might be helpful in communicating DGPI work to the Council and River Pine citizens?
- What are some ways you could plan with the Department to ensure DGPI, and the research partnership, continues after the grant ends?



APPENDIX 1

Reciprocity Grant Proposal Checklist

The following information should be used as a tool for supporting the co-construction of a grant proposal with Tribal Nations and communities. The checklist focuses on tangible ways to center reciprocity in the research process.

Who are the members of the grant leadership team?

- It is critical for community voice to be present throughout the project. A simple way to ensure community input is to have a community representative serve as a Co-PI on a proposal. Having community representation on the leadership team will ensure the research remains reciprocal, and enhances community buy-in for the project.

How is the budget structured to ensure reciprocity?

- Ensure there are equitable funds for community representatives to participate in project leadership meetings and professional meetings (e.g., budget for travel funds, conference proceedings, flights, vehicle rental, per diem, mileage, etc.);
- Hold meetings or gatherings within the community;
- Provide attendees with meals when meetings occur over several hours or during meal times;
- Hire Native and community owned businesses (e.g., caterers, artists, venues, hotels, equipment rentals, etc.); Ask community members for recommendations if you aren't sure who to hire.
- Compensate time, labor and expertise of community members supporting the project through employment, a soft-money funded appointment, honorarium or hourly consulting rate. Compensation by a traditional, Indigenous-made gift (e.g., wild rice, maple syrup, maple sugar, and other handmade or harvested items) or Indigenous art (e.g., black ash basket, beadwork, wool blanket) may be more appropriate in circumstances where the expertise covers traditional or community knowledge;

How will findings be disseminated to the community?

- Ask the community how to make research products relevant to their needs;
- Commit budgetary funds for the development of research products specific to the community (e.g., videos, curriculum, handouts, informational posters, brochures and other related materials.);
- Present work at National and local conferences that are specific to Indigenous issues and tribal governance.

Are the letters of collaboration from appropriate stakeholders?

- Letters of Collaboration should come from people elected or appointed to represent the community. These letters should always come with tribal council support on letterhead. For example, if you are provided a letter from a department director, they will be able to follow through appropriate channels to gain permission to provide the letter. If you are unclear about the letter of support process, it is important to ask and not make assumptions.

NOTES



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