

Webinar & Live Discussion

# Maskwacîs Maternal Child and Family Wellbeing Relationships Through Trust



On December 15th, 2022, CBRCanada hosted two great presenters: Dr. Richard T. Oster and Mosom Rick Lightning, Elder and Knowledge Holder of the Emineskin Cree Nation in Alberta, for an online seminar followed by a group discussion. The presenters explored the concept of trust in building successful relationships when conducting research with First Nations communities, such as within their Maskwacîs Maternal, Child, and Family Wellbeing Group project.



During the live discussion, the presenters probed participants to discuss successes and challenges with developing trusting research relationships, how trusting relationships can be built within projects that may not be fully community-based, and how we can move towards ceremony within research despite structural or institutional barriers. The following is a summary of themes that emerged from the ensuing participant group discussions.

## Participants' Reflections



## Building Trust Successfully

Trusting relationships have been successfully built when researchers:

- Embed themselves into the communities they work with and go to their spaces instead of expecting the community to come to them.
- Engage community facilitators as leaders within research projects.
- Engage wholeheartedly with communities to embrace their culture, ceremony, and ways of knowing, thinking, and doing.
- Genuinely invest in nurturing relationships over the long-term.
- Connect deeply and emotionally.



## Challenges to Building Trust

Building trusting relationships can be challenging when:

- Researchers themselves hold or are embedded within institutions that uphold 'western' research ideals.
- Researchers 'talk the talk' of community-based research without 'walking the walk'.
- Researchers have their own personal agenda of advancing their career that may supersede the research agenda of supporting and bettering communities.
- The culture of competition (for funding, for tenure, for project contracts) within research hinders collaborative work and relationship building.
- Researchers fear that showing emotional vulnerability will compromise their professionalism.



## Embedding Ceremony into Research

Embedding ceremony into research processes is important when building trusting relationships, and can be done when:

- Researchers develop an intimate, emotional, real-world understanding of the culture and people they are going to work with, so they can embrace culture, traditions, and ceremonies authentically.
- Researchers actively and meaningfully engage in ceremony and prioritize integrating ceremony and culture into the research processes (instead of participating in a detached or performative manner).



## Embracing Community-Based Research to Build Trusting Relationships

Trusting relationships can be built within research projects when a community-based research approach is truly embraced.

- Relationships and communities can be damaged when research is not authentically "community based."
- A risk to community-based research is when institutions or researchers call their work "community-based" without fully embracing and applying the principles of community-based research.
- Applying a community-based research approach means having transparency with your research partners, and not holding hidden agendas.
- A community-based approach may require non-traditional ethics considerations or community-based ethical boards and may also require non-traditional avenues of funding more willing to recognize relationship-building as a valuable research investment.
- True community-based research means respecting and valuing the knowledge contributions of community experts as equal to the researchers, as well as fair/equal financial compensations.

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