

Community of Practice Discussion Summary on "Indigenous Research Methods"



Thank you to Elora Gehue, Coady Institute at St. Francis Xavier University, for her guest presentation on "Exploring Indigenous Research Methods" and to all Community of Practice participants for your contributions.

In December 2023, Community of Practice (CoP) participants shared the following insights in response to two questions: 1) how Indigenous research methods can contribute to more holistic understanding of complex issues and what insights can be offered that go beyond conventional research; and 2) strategies and considerations that can help ensure a respectful and collaborative approach to research that values Indigenous knowledge systems.

How do Indigenous research methods contribute to a more holistic understanding of complex issues and what insights can be offered that go beyond conventional research approaches?

1. Approaching research in relational and culturally sensitive ways

Nurturing relationships, fostering a sense of community, being open to diverse perspectives, and approaching the community with humility are all elements of Indigenous research.

2. Using inclusive and collaborative research methods

Research methods, such as sharing circles, provide a comfortable environment to engage in open conversations. These kind of research methods emphasize inclusivity and allow for in-depth and rich knowledge gathering.

3. Respecting local research protocols

Indigenous nations across different regions have distinct protocols. It's important for researchers to be aware of it, gain understanding about specifics, and respect the right protocols.

4. Considering environmental impacts

An Indigenous research approach considers environmental impacts and is not purely human-centred. Research should always aim to minimize interference with the natural environment.

5. Eliminating hierarchical structures

Indigenous research methods aim to create collaborative and reciprocal relationships. recognize the expertise and perspectives of researchers and research participants alike.

6. Using steering committees to guide research

Steering committees, comprised of individuals with Indigenous backgrounds, including Elders, play a crucial role in guiding research processes.

What strategies and considerations should be employed to ensure a respectful and collaborative approach to research that values Indigenous knowledge systems?

1 Seek an Indigenous ethics review

Researchers should reach out to the local Indigenous ethics board (if available) or Indigenous organizations for an ethics review to ensure research is culturally-relevant, safe and following Indigenous research protocols.

3 Reflect on and address power imbalances

Examine and address power structures within the research project/processes to move toward a more inclusive and respectful approach. Resources such as the [Tri-Council Policy statement](#) and engaging with organizations like [CAAN](#) can be helpful.

5 Be clear about data sovereignty and ownership

Researchers should ensure open and clear conversations and form agreements with the community regarding data retention, ownership, and sovereignty.

2 Challenge hierarchical views of knowledge

Researchers can challenge the notion of certain ways of knowing by bringing the concepts of "two-eyed seeing" to present Indigenous knowledge and Western science side by side, and of engaging individuals with lived experience in research.

4 Build relationships and trust

Researchers need to be flexible with timelines and take time to address the right Indigenous protocol(s) where their research takes place.

6 Emphasize capacity bridging and long-term impact

Researchers should aim for long-term community benefits and bridge capacity within the community so they can independently run research projects in the future.

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