

Protocols & Principles For Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context

**University of Victoria
*Faculty of Human and Social Development***

February 2003. (final revision)

CONTENTS

- 1 Rationale
- 2 Indigenous Peoples – Implications for Research
- 3 Protocols and Principles for Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context
- 4 References

1 RATIONALE

- 1.1 Researchers are knowledge brokers, people who have the power to construct legitimating arguments for or against ideas, theories or practices. They are collectors of information and producers of meaning, which can be used for, or against Indigenous interests.
- 1.2 The Faculty of Human and Social Development recognizes its responsibility to address the need for an institutional protocol for both staff and students for conducting research involving Indigenous participants and/or Indigenous culture as a focal point.
- 1.3 While the Human Ethics in Research Policy protects the rights of human research subjects, this protocol reinforces the Faculty's respect for the Coast Salish and other Indigenous peoples. The two policies complement one another.
- 1.4 The student's committee shall approve any proposed research, which has effects on or could potentially affect Indigenous people. Following approval, the research shall be reviewed for final approval by the Indigenous Research Sub-Committee in accordance with the protocols and procedures established by the Human Ethics in Research Sub-Committee." It is the responsibility of the Human Ethics in Research Sub Committee to implement this protocol.
- 1.5 This protocol has been developed to help ensure that, in all research sponsored by the Faculty of Human and Social Development on or involving Indigenous peoples, appropriate respect is given to the cultures, languages, knowledge and values of Indigenous peoples, and to the standards used by Indigenous peoples to legitimate knowledge. Such research could include populations containing Indigenous members, research involving Indigenous people as respondents or co-researcher research involving any aspect of Indigenous intellectual property.

This protocol shall represent the standard of best practice adopted by the Faculty of Human and Social Development.

- 1.6 The complexity of the research environment is acknowledged in this protocol. The researcher will probably have a commitment to stakeholders including two or more of the following: the institution, sponsor(s), funding agency, the community, individuals and organizations. Each of these has their own protocols and expectations of the researcher.

The challenge facing the researcher is to consider the interests of all concerned and protect the community. This indeed is a complex situation.

How the coalition between the researcher and these various interest groups is established depends on the negotiation process. The researcher should not have to compromise his/her personal ethics and principles in the undertaking of the research. If conflict of ethics occurs, the researcher may need to investigate alternatives, for example working with a different group.

This protocol is intended as a guideline for researchers who need to address the interests of all concerned in the research process, including the researchers themselves.

2 INDIGENOUS PEOPLES - IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Research that involves Indigenous people or Indigenous culture as a focal interest (subject matter), whether directly or indirectly, should ensure that research protocols uphold the principles of protection, partnership and participation.

In order to determine whether Indigenous people have an interest in the research question, consultation with the appropriate Indigenous individuals, communities or organizations should occur. When this consultation process is not explicitly known, the Indigenous Research Sub-Committee or a designated body in conjunction with the researcher, can facilitate locating the appropriate organization or individuals so that Indigenous people are involved as participants. This should occur in the early planning stages of the research.

- 2.1.1 Implications for Researchers. The Faculty of Human and Social Development is committed to respecting the goals and aspirations of Indigenous people involved in research. This includes retention of Indigenous control over resources, including people.

Moreover, an approach consistent with Indigenous Self Determination means that research conducted by the students or the staff of the Faculty will honor the principles of partnership, participation and protection:

- 2.1.1 **Partnership:** Where Indigenous people are major participants in research or they have a major interest in the outcome of a research project focused on an issue of relevance to Indigenous people, then working relationships based on collaboration and partnership should be

established between the researcher and these participants. This would include the mutual sharing of research skills and research outcomes.

- 2.1.2 **Protection:** In accordance to working relationships based on collaboration and partnership, the researcher must ensure the protection of Indigenous participants and Indigenous resources in the research process, including as far as possible protection from any negative impact that might result from the findings of the project being made public. This may include placing a moratorium on the research material for an agreed period of time or on keeping confidential certain material.

Protection goes beyond the requirement to obtain informed consent from the participant. As a general rule, consultation should occur if Indigenous people are to be involved as participants in the project or the research project relates to an issue of importance to those Indigenous people. This consultation should also involve guiding the researcher to what needs to be protected and how this protection can be effected.

- 2.1.3 **Participation:** Indigenous people have a right to participate in and enjoy the benefits that might result from research, and Indigenous involvement in this research.

The rationale for including, or excluding, Indigenous participants in the research project need to be made clear. Research should empower the community involved and excluding Indigenous from the research project might simply serve to marginalize them further.

If there are no justifiable reasons for excluding Indigenous people from participating in the research project, then suitable steps should be taken to ensure appropriate inclusion.

3 PROTOCOLS AND PRINCIPLES FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN AN INDIGENOUS CONTEXT

The following protocols and principles are to be addressed by any researcher within the Faculty of Human and Social Development who is conducting research that involves Indigenous people or Indigenous culture as a focal interest (subject matter), whether directly or indirectly. This is regardless of whether the researcher is a non-Indigenous or Indigenous person.

3.1 Ethics

- 3.1.1 The consent of the people involved in the research, where such people are identifiable, will be sought and confirmed before the research commences as well as on an ongoing basis. Where there are no identifiable persons or groups, then an Indigenous mentor/consultation group will be established for areas where public information/knowledge is cited. With regard to informed consent the researcher will need to establish who speaks for the community and what the conditions of the informed consent will be. Appropriate institutional advice will be made available to guide the consultation process.
- 3.1.2 The aims of the research as well as the anticipated outcome(s) of such an investigation will be conveyed to the people involved in the research in a clear, concise and appropriate way.
- 3.1.3 The rights, interests and sensitivities of the people being researched will be acknowledged and protected, including the protection of any intellectual property rights such as those pertaining to traditional medicines, ceremonies, songs, rituals and other sacred cultural traditions.
- 3.1.4 Research tools and techniques, which are open, direct and transparent, should be used at all times. Secret or covert work will not be acceptable. All participants will be fully informed that they are involved in a research study before the study begins.
- 3.1.5 The people participating have control over the results of the research process and as such have an absolute right to exercise control over the information they have volunteered. This includes the right to control it, to restrict access to it, or to withdraw part or all of the information from the actual research project findings. It is the researcher's responsibility to clarify with research participants how this control might be exercised.

- 3.1.6 The researcher(s) must honestly and accurately represent their skills and experience to those involved in the research.
- 3.1.7 Researchers will not exploit informants, or the information gathered from the research, for personal gain or aggrandisement. Where possible and appropriate, fair return should be given for participants' help and services, which should be acknowledged in the final output.
- 3.1.8 The people involved in the research activities will have the right to appeal to the students research committee or the University of Victoria's Human Research Subjects policy #1250 in the event of any problems arising in the research process. These committees will be clearly identified before the research commences.
- 3.1.9 All the ethical principles outlined in the University of Victoria Human Research Subjects Ethics Policy #1250 will be adhered to in this policy, including the right of research participants to remain anonymous.
- 3.1.10 An important aspect of the question of ethics is values. Indigenous values must be acknowledged by incorporation within the research design and methodology of a project. These values are such things as:
- Ensure that Indigenous values are upheld at all times
 - Ensure that Indigenous people are consulted and have given clear direction on research activity before, during and after research.
 - Ensure that appropriate aspects of Indigenous peoples are understood, acknowledge and upheld
 - Indigenous culture is strictly upheld and observed
 - Ensure there are no conflicts of Indigenous values, culture and tradition
 - This process runs throughout the project when and where appropriate.
- 3.1.11 All individuals or groups involved in the research process will be given a copy of this policy.

3.2 Accountability

- 3.2.1 The researchers' main responsibility and accountability will be to the people involved in the activities being researched, who will be considered as having an equal interest in the project.
- 3.2.2 The people participating have an absolute right to know as far as can be anticipated what will become of the information they have volunteered as well as its possible use and application.

- 3.2.3 Researchers must be willing at the outset of research projects to recognize that the results and outcomes of any research contributed by an individual or group will be presented to them in draft form for editing before any form of distribution or publication, i.e. they will have the right of veto or censure over their contribution.
- 3.2.4 The contribution of any individual or group consulted will be acknowledged in the final research report, except that all individuals or groups taking part in the research have a right to remain anonymous.

3.3 Participatory Approach

- 3.3.1 The terms of the research as well as the research question and methodology will be designed in consultation with, and having due consideration for, the expertise of the Indigenous individuals or groups who will form part of the research.
- 3.3.2 The researcher and the individual or group providing the information will share continual monitoring of the research process equally.
- 3.3.3 Integral to successful participatory research is the development of a true research partnership based on trust and one that does not prejudice the interest of any one partner making up the partnership.
- 3.3.4 As part of collaborative processes the research initiator will take responsibility for sharing and co-developing research skills with research participants.

3.4 Intellectual Property Rights of the Research

In the initial consultation stage it will be necessary to establish where the ownership of the end result of the research will reside:

- i) Community ownership of materials
- ii) Published Academic Purposes (credits)
- iii) Any Royalties to be given to the community

3.5 Research Outcomes

- 3.5.1 The research will make a positive contribution to Indigenous needs, aims and aspirations as defined by Indigenous people and the enhancement of

Indigenous values. It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that Indigenous participants are clear about the aim of the research.

- 3.5.2 The findings of the research will be presented in a format that is readily understandable and accessible to all stakeholders, and particularly to those who provide the basis for the research findings. Where appropriate, the research findings will be presented in oral, written and visual forms in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous publications and forums.
- 3.5.3 A summary of the final research report will be made available to any individual or group who provided information used in the final research report. A full report of the research will be held by the Departments or Programs within the Faculty, and the University Of Victoria's library. In the case of an artwork and creative works, participating individuals or groups will be advised where it can be viewed.

4 REFERENCES

Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. eds (1994). Handbook of Qualitative Research. Sage.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. (1997). For Seven Generations: An Information Legacy of the royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (CD-ROM). Libraxus Inc.

University Of Victoria Human Research Ethical Committee. (1999). Guidelines for Requesting Ethical Review of Activities Involving Human Subjects/Participants in Research.