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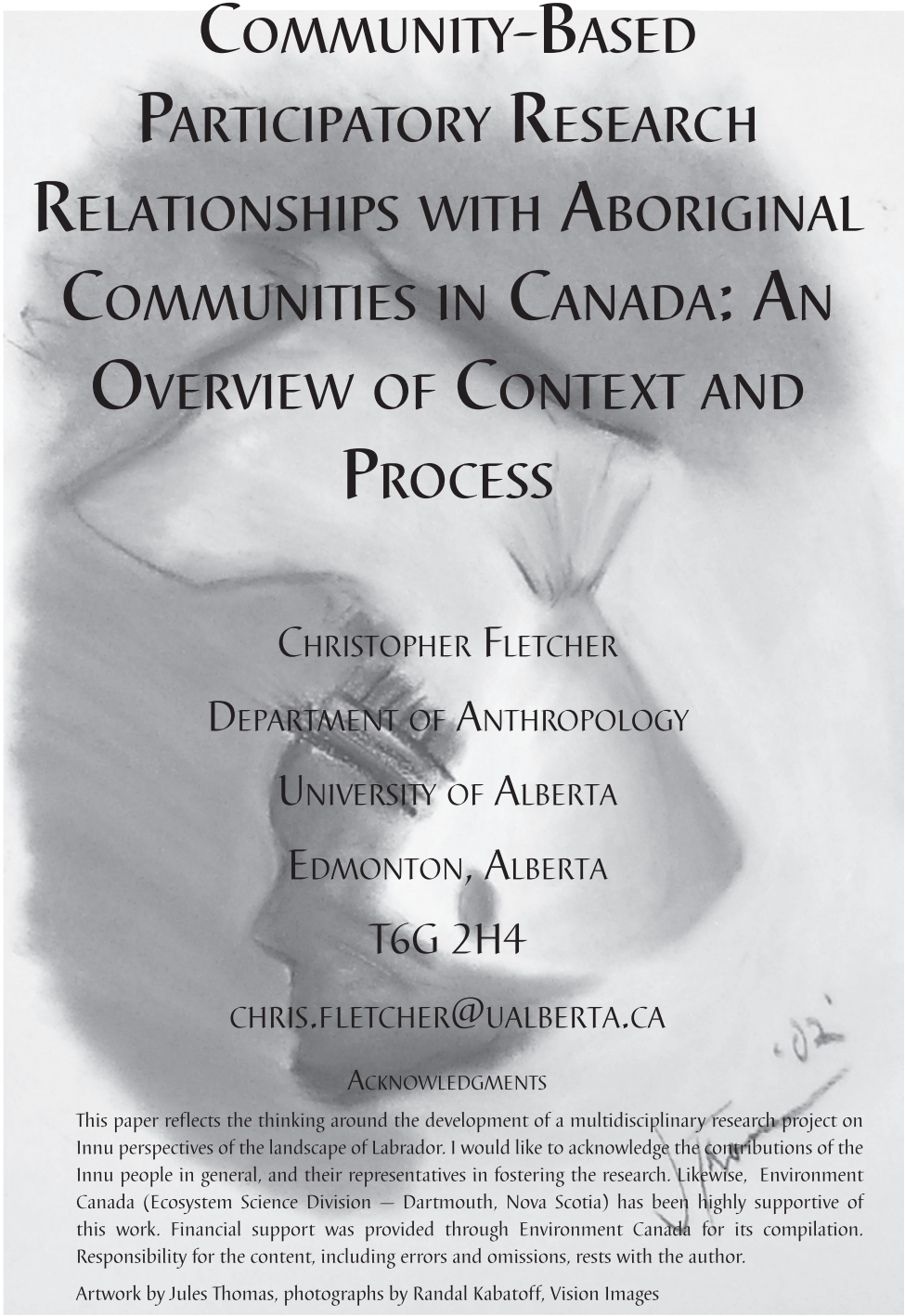


COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH RELATIONSHIPS WITH ABORIGINAL COMMUNITIES IN CANADA

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Community-Based Participatory Research Relationships with Aboriginal Communities in Canada: An Overview of Context and Process



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Artwork by Jules Thomas, photographs by Randal Kabatoff, Vision Images

Introduction

In Canada, community-based participatory research (CBPR) has developed as a responsive and responsible research method in tandem with the growth of Aboriginal political autonomy at the community, national, and international levels (Brant Castellano 1993). As Aboriginal people have exercised increasing authority over events in their own communities the role of research and researchers in perpetuating historical injustices and in maintaining the inadequate status quo has been questioned. In general these assessments point to the historical role of research in generating the difficult conditions within many Aboriginal communities and in helping shape the political structure of internal colonialism that characterizes the relationship of Aboriginal people with the state. It also reflects the critical reading that science and social science writing has been given by Aboriginal peoples as they master the languages of these disciplines.



Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is an important tool for researchers working with Aboriginal and indigenous communities. It acknowledges the different ways of knowing, giving equal weight to scientific expressions of knowledge and traditional or cultural expressions of knowledge. In the past, researchers have often assumed that traditional knowledge was less important than scientific knowledge. The term Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) refers to the cultural knowledge of people living within a particular environment. Thus, the TEK of the Inuit will be different from that of the Plains Cree because their environments are

A characteristic of the so-called postmodern condition is a skepticism about the encompassing discourses of the past; nationalism, race, political ideologies, and techno-scientific progress among them. This is reflected in the shift in value accorded to non-scientific knowledge and is characterized by a renewed effort to catalogue, incorporate, and understand biological (and other) information that is presented in non-scientific jargon. In work with Aboriginal communities in Canada this work has often focused on Traditional Ecological Knowledge or "TEK" research and involves collecting accounts from people about the cultural body of knowledge of, and first hand experience with, the lived environment. Of course, it is not only ecological knowledge which is "traditional." A great deal of culturally informed knowledge, including that of health, has been framed in this manner. People around the globe are faced with similar issues in the interpretation and use of local knowledge

by individuals who are not part of the local community. This process is inevitably open to misunderstanding, co-optation and misrepresentation. As a result, indigenous people are increasingly concerned about how the transmission of knowledge itself will come to influence the environments they live in. Consequently, mechanisms need to be established to manage the perspectives of different people and orient their impact.

The collection and application of non-scientific information to contemporary issues like environmental concerns is not a transparent process. It requires new communication frameworks and awareness of social factors that many scientists are unfamiliar with in their work. At the very least it requires methods that allow information to flow between the scientific and local communities in a mutually intelligible manner. CBPR is one element of that process and is critical to building productive working relationships between Aboriginal and scientific communities.

different. This knowledge is generally expressed and understood in non-scientific terms; that is, it has been acquired through lived experience, rather than a process of experimentation to verify an idea.

CBPR provides a framework for blending TEK research with scientific models to produce productive working relationships between Aboriginal and scientific communities. The purpose of this paper is to describe the principles of CBPR and provide some guidelines for its use. In this way, scientific researchers and Aboriginal communities may achieve deeper and more appropriate understandings together.



This paper presents a broad overview of the conditions in which CBPR methods have developed, a framework for implementing this approach and some practical considerations for conducting research in Aboriginal communities. The information presented here is an attempt to transpose some of the current practice in social and human sciences to areas where CBPR would seem to be less applicable and where researchers tend to have less, if any, training in community based research methods or theory. While this paper aims at a general description of CBPR it was written with an eye towards multi-disciplinary research involving Aboriginal communities in Northern Canada. The presumed audience is people with little experience working closely with Aboriginal peoples but who have an open mind to other ways of seeing the world.

The material presented here is based in part on the available literature, and in part on my professional experience as an anthropologist who has worked closely with Aboriginal communities and organizations in Northern Canada for the past decade. I would like to acknowledge the influence of publications by the Dene Cultural Institute on the material presented in this report. My overall objective, and that of researchers who have conducted participatory research with Dene communities, is to argue that despite the tense relationship that can at times shroud relations between researchers and Aboriginal communities, when properly organized and conducted research has the potential to benefit all people. In order for this to occur the social and political contexts in which research takes place must be recognized and their influence incorporated into research question development, project design and the dissemination of results. While this may seem like extraneous information to some researchers, I believe, and it is my experience, that it has the potential to foster productive working relationships and generate original research. Most researchers are enthusiastic about what they do and share that enthusiasm with a relatively limited number of like-minded colleagues. CBPR methods help in part to transmit that enthusiasm to the non-specialist and produce results that carry significance for all involved.



In writing this paper, I have used publications written by other people (the scientific approach) and my own professional experience as an anthropologist working with Aboriginal communities. I have particularly relied on publications by the Dene Cultural Institute, as noted in the references. See the section on Additional Resources at the end of this paper for an expanded list of references kindly provided by an anonymous reviewer.



Overview of Community-Based Participatory Research

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) developed out of the historic confluence of changing political structures in newly independent countries in what was then referred to as the "third world," and the experiences of development workers in those countries.

We can trace the origins of CBPR to a current of thought and praxis in education, development, social sciences, and health work that recognized the necessity of incorporating local realities into program design in all aspects. The philosophy behind CBPR has evolved significantly since the 1970s at the insistence of indigenous peoples' organizations. The scientific community is now much more likely to talk about doing research *for* and *with* Aboriginal peoples than *on* them as was the case in the past. At a minimum CBPR methods recognize the capacities of community experts to inform research design, decision making processes and effect meaningful change. The evolution of CBPR is closely linked with adult education movements which equated literacy and skill development with political empowerment (Hall 1981, 1988). The CBPR approach grew out of particular political fervor of post-colonial change in the developing world. Its philosophy was quickly incorporated in North American in situations where research was conducted with marginalized groups, ethnic communities and Aboriginal peoples. In developed countries, CBPR responded to a diverse series of critical perspectives on science and research which portrayed them as cultural practices embedded in a structural foundation of entrenched social and political inequity. These critiques are united in suggesting that knowledge creation is an ideological process that tends to reproduce the structural conditions in which the knowledge originates — a direct challenge to the positivist and universalist views of science and scientific knowledge that prevail.

Community-based participatory research began in the 1970s, as researchers began to understand the importance of including local conditions and community experts in designing their research. In the decades since, awareness of the cultural implications and foundations of all knowledge, has persuaded researchers to conduct their studies in partnership with communities. In this way, research designs are no longer based solely on Western science, but incorporate Aboriginal and indigenous ways of knowing. As a result, everyone benefits.



The CBPR model draws together the concept of sustainable development with grassroots political organization and local empowerment. One of the most important acknowledgments it makes is that "development" is not a linear process represented by the history of western industrialization, but rather that there are "developments"; kinds, shades and flavours of economic

systems and change that can enhance — or undermine — the social, cultural and ecological contexts in which they are situated (Escobar 1995). In this perspective, development oriented CBPR became concerned with identifying the kinds of change that are appropriate to local communities and helping to provide tools for people to implement constructive change for themselves.

CBPR is a philosophy and method that seeks to engage people and communities in all phases of research from the conceptualization of the research problem to the dissemination of the results. At its core it is about relationship building between diverse communities, contributing to local self-sufficiency, and recognizing the inequities that exist between people and places. It is oriented to the application of practical knowledge to locally defined issues in a way that provides long-term improvement in the quality of life of a group of people be that physical, intellectual, interpersonal, or political. The approach accepts first and foremost that all inquiry is political by definition; information does not exist in a vacuum but is generated within a specific articulation of power and is interpreted within the confines of established intellectual structures. As a philosophy, CBPR is inclusive of different ways of seeing the world. It incorporates multiple perspectives. It recognizes local knowledge systems as valid on their own epistemological foundations and views them as contributing to a larger understanding of the world and the place of humans in it. It takes as an a priori assumption that research and science are not value free. They can be used to help people help themselves in their daily struggles or they can be used to subjugate local opinion and action.



Community-based participatory research emphasizes the importance of context to knowledge: money, politics, culture, and environment all influence our perceptions of the world around us. Academic and health profession researchers see the world in a very different way than Aboriginal peoples. For a long time, researchers failed to understand the significance of the context of knowledge. Their way of knowing was "obviously" the "right" way and the only one they considered.

CBPR emphasizes the importance and value of different ways of knowing according to context. CPBR researchers are careful to make the community con-

Clearly science is a powerful tool in political action and we should not make the mistake of relativizing away the differences between knowledge systems at that level. Aboriginal communities need and use science and re-

search of many kinds and in a variety of contexts. The current challenge to Aboriginal peoples and the scientific community is to articulate the different ways of understanding in a mutually beneficial way.

The Political Economy of Data

In North America, community based participatory research (CBPR) in Aboriginal communities has developed in the context of land claims negotiations and impact assessment of large scale industrial projects. These politically charged milieu have generated new meanings and controversy around the collection, analysis and interpretation of a variety of kinds of data. Aboriginal people and their organizations have argued that interpretive frameworks are influenced by non-Aboriginal world-views and that if their perspective was taken into account much would be different. In Canada, the Berger Inquiry of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline project (Berger 1977) represents a landmark in incorporating Aboriginal perspectives in a political/developmental context. In effect it was the first time that the planning for a major development project considered the impact on Aboriginal lifestyles and heard first hand the opinions of Aboriginal people. The Inquiry report made the connection between Aboriginal occupation of land, environmental integrity, and human well-being, closing the artificial distinction between social and ecological frames of reference. The Berger Commission's methods of direct consultation on social and scientific issues have been adopted in many spheres of research, including health. The Berger Inquiry replaced the popular conception of Canada's north as an uninhabited resource frontier with the awareness of the north as homeland for Aboriginal people. The appreciation of perspective has subsequently gained considerable currency in efforts to understand the nature of the environment as it is experi-

text an integral part of their research design. Because each way of knowing has value, each must be included.

North American Aboriginal communities have been focussed on the political issues of land claims, and environmental impact assessments for large industrial projects. These communities were directly consulted for the first time with The Berger Inquiry of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Project in 1977. The Report which resulted from these hearings made a clear connection between human occupation of land, or social factors, and the environmental integrity of the land, or the ecological factors.



enced, the importance of this to individual well-being and community integrity, and the meanings attributed to development in the frontier/homeland (Hoare, Levy, and Robinson 1993).

Philosophies of Science: Distinguishing Method and Context

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) should not be viewed as a management tool for dealing with Aboriginal communities but an opportunity for Aboriginal peoples to influence the mechanisms that affect life in their communities and on their lands.



One of the fundamental beliefs that science generates about itself is that it produces objective knowledge that is free from extraneous influence. For people in Aboriginal communities in Canada science and research have been inseparable from political processes, resulting in their economic, political and physical marginalization since the earliest contacts with non-natives. The scientific method may promise verifiable observations of an objective reality but it does not operate in such an environment.

> Knowledge produced by science and the scientific method of reproducible experiments is often thought of as value-free or objective and, therefore, better than all other ways of knowing. Only recently have researchers begun to consider that science is practised by people and people inevitably are influenced by their values. In fact, they are often so influenced by these values and beliefs that they ignore the results of their own research or misinterpret them. In the case of research affecting Aboriginal people, scientists have made assumptions based on their personal contexts, rather than the context of

While training in scientific method stresses its objectivity — and the neutrality of the information thus produced — there is little examination of the contexts in which some kinds of information are generated and others are not. Academic critics of science have described science as a social process and pointed to the ideological role that it plays in creating and maintaining specific social and economic realities. Science is a highly authoritative form of discourse that demands an uncritical acceptance of the knowledge it produces and promotes the value of that knowledge as superior to other ways of understanding. When we take into account the experiences and perspectives

of peoples who have different intellectual traditions, we see how socially imbued scientific neutrality actually is. An uncritical acceptance of science has obscured the political processes which result from the knowledge it produces. At its simplest level the association of objective data, derived through scientific method, transmits an air of rationality and naturalness to the action based on that data, shielding it from critical scrutiny.

Science has served us well helping, in part, to create a society of unparalleled wealth. This has been achieved through the progressive conversion of elements of nature into resources with value attributed to them by culture. However, for people who do not share in a long tradition of this world view, and who have not naturalized this perspective through cultural mechanisms, science can be seen as a tool of manipulation and marginalization. Despite this, in the past couple of decades Aboriginal communities have come to see the benefit of using scientific arguments to advance their own social and political objectives. Taking account of the Aboriginal critique of science we gain the opportunity to redesign its practice in a way which contributes to social well-being in Aboriginal communities rather than undermining it.

the Aboriginal communities they were researching.

Science has given North American society greater physical control over the environment and this has made great wealth possible for those who have been brought up to value it. To share the wealth, it is also necessary to share the view of the world which created it. Aboriginal societies have developed from a very different view of the world. They come to the practice of science with the intent of using its language and methods to serve more traditional purposes.



Aboriginal Political Autonomy and Scientific Rationality

An important factor in the development of an Aboriginal critique of science has been the frequent direct contact Aboriginal peoples have had with researchers of all sorts. Their experience with research often paints an unflattering portrait at a number of levels. Stories about individual experiences with researchers circulate within and between communities exposing a negative side of scientific practice. Other stories do not circulate widely because

they are too humiliating to recount, but remain in the collective experience of Aboriginal communities with the mainstream Canadian population.

In many cases research methods were offensive at an individual level, unaware or uncaring of cultural norms of interpersonal behaviour and respect. These individual experiences are today interpreted as evidence of the powerlessness of Aboriginal peoples. They also support the perception that to non-natives Aboriginal culture is insignificant, a nuisance variable to be controlled for. For some people, their experiences with researchers are often part of a lifetime of humiliating and alienating interactions resulting from institutional, implied and overt racism. In many places there is a legacy of ill feeling and profound pain that has grown out of the historical process of being the objects of research (Oakes and Riewe 1996). A new relationship between researchers and community should at least be aware of this and take active measures to address and rectify historic injustices.



In the past, researchers came to Aboriginal communities with assumptions that biased their interpretation of results and influenced their attitudes. Unable to see the meaning in Aboriginal customs, they assumed there wasn't any. This created a legacy of humiliation and anger. Slowly, researchers are coming to see that methods such as CBPR make it possible to be respectful of Aboriginal customs without losing the strengths of the scientific method. Scientists are learning to recognize the contributions of traditional knowledge. As Aboriginal people learn the skills of scientific research, they are able to work with their

At the federal level, the experience of Aboriginal people with economic and territorial marginalization has been based on the collection of vital statistics about them. The importance of number gathering is paramount to exerting state level control over people (O'Neil, et al. 1998). Without a numerical knowledge of people, wildlife, trees, minerals and so on there cannot be governance. This is not a theoretical abstraction for people in relatively isolated communities, this is how colonization was experienced. The legacy of ethnic inclusion and exclusion based on the listing of people in different bureaucratic categories and the association of vital statistics with them still determines the manner in which resources are allocated to communities and individuals. This is clearly demonstrated on the front page of the March 1999 issue (V.2, N.2) of Tipatshimun, "Voice of the Innu Nation," which is entirely devoted to discussion of acquiring status in the eyes of the federal govern-

ment. Status is, of course, a bureaucratic, not social, distinction that requires enumeration.

To summarize, research in its current manifestations cannot be divorced from the political context of research in the past or from the distribution of power today (Flaherty 1995). To accumulate data about people and/or the lands they occupy is an exercise which attributes authority to those who hold and interpret the data. Interpretation imbued with the authority of scientific discourse allows for the rationalization of action that may not serve the interests of the people studied, at least from their perspective. Consequently, Aboriginal communities and organizations are exercising different levels of control and ownership over research agendas, data collection, interpretation and dissemination. Rather than viewing this turn of events as counter to scientific principles, some researchers have incorporated the goals of Aboriginal communities within their research agendas. Alternative approaches to research like CBPR have developed that take into account the relations of power implicit between Aboriginal communities, researchers and the places they come from. When properly conducted research can be conducted with methodological rigor and with contextual sensitivity.

communities in ways which maximize the strengths of both viewpoints.



A Framework for Community-Based Participatory Research

The basic principles of CBPR as they relate to working with Aboriginal communities include:

1. Acknowledge and address the imbalance of power between Aboriginal communities; the state and its institutions; universities and researchers;

2. Focus research onto issues of import to community members;
3. Accept the diversity of ways of seeing and understanding the world as positive;
4. Foster the development of local autonomy within the community and beyond;
5. Develop capacities within the community that contribute towards self-sufficiency and self-determination;
6. Engage community members as equal stakeholders in the research process;
7. Encourage equitable and sustainable development through research;
8. Approach research as an opportunity to provide public education about research in general and the issue at hand;
9. Respect the ethical guidelines established by organizations that represent the interests of Aboriginal peoples.



Some Canadian Aboriginal communities, particularly in Nunavut, Northwest Territories and the Yukon, have developed a political process for research which requires that community consent must be obtained in the form of a license before any research can be undertaken. While this is a good beginning toward collaborative research, it is important that the collaboration be maintained throughout the processes of data collection, data analysis and the reporting of results.

There is no single method of conducting CBPR: the approach is characterized by a flexibility of thought and action which was not present in classical scientific research. Consequently, the framework for developing and maintaining a working relationship with a community presented here is an open ended model to be reviewed and modified as each situation requires.

Community Guidelines and Control over the Research Agenda

As Aboriginal communities have gained political autonomy they have been quick to assert their right to control the flow of research conducted in their communities. These efforts have in some cases led to a formaliza-

tion of the research process in Aboriginal communities. For example, in the Northwest Territories licensing guidelines have been established that require community consent before research can be undertaken. Similar arrangements exist in the Yukon and Nunavut. While formal licensing procedures have not been developed in Northern Quebec or Labrador, research normally undergoes a community vetting process and is overseen by political organizations and institutions under Aboriginal control. In most cases a community consultation process and researcher conduct guidelines are agreed to before the research has begun. A dissemination strategy should also be included in this process. While these measures assert a degree of control over what kinds of research go on in communities, care must be taken throughout the life of the research project to build and maintain community participation, trust and interest. Licensing and formal approvals are the very beginning of the community-based participatory research (CBPR) process.

Several Aboriginal political and cultural organizations have worked to change the nature of community-based research beyond the licensing and community approval guidelines. The Dene Cultural Institute has been at the forefront of this effort. In their work to document and protect Traditional Ecological Knowledge (Johnson 1992) they have generated a series of guidelines for conducting CBPR on TEK in Dene communities (Dene Cultural Institute 1994, Masazumi and Quirk 1993). These provide an effective framework for CBPR. In this section of the report the CBPR process will be described drawing extensively from this and related material (Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies 1988; 1998, Inuit Tapirisat of Canada 1993).

1. Establish contact, develop a working relationship

The first and most critical phase of a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project comes in the initial contacts. In many cases these first encounters establish the tenor and style of a working relationship that will persist throughout. Establishing an open and trusting working environment from the initial contacts between researcher and community representatives is of utmost importance.

In some cases communities will identify an issue that needs investigation and seek outside expertise for researching it. Research conducted under politically charged and restricted time frames is faced with severe difficulties from the outset. In these instances the situational immediacy outweighs the local interests in effective control and conduct of research. While this is how a great deal of research is undertaken on the environment of northern regions, and in some cases on health issues, when the opportunity is presented to

conduct research outside of a "process" more work can be put into developing genuine participatory relationship.

In other cases, a research issue or project which has community level implications will first be conceptualized outside of the community. The researchers then must establish a relationship with the community or communities involved. Normally this involves contacting the political bodies representing the communities to start a process of consultation. In some cases, multiple organizations may have a stake in the project and should be contacted.

Institutional consultations should take place in which local research needs, questions and issues are informally identified. The goals of these early consultations are threefold 1) develop face to face contacts between researchers, community members and their representatives; 2) begin to identify areas of research synergy and; 3) explore ways in which the research questions can be framed so that they correspond with local interests. It is also prudent to explore local community dynamics with respect to research in the past, attitudes toward to outside agencies, current issues of public concern and so on. Background knowledge about local issues allows researchers to interact constructively with people in the community and develop fruitful working relationships.



Framework for Community-Based Research

1. Establish contact, develop a working relationship
   a. Develop face-to-face contacts between researchers, community members and their representatives.
   b. Identify research areas of mutual interest.
   c. Explore ways to frame research questions for mutual benefit.



In summary, the initial contact phase starts a dialogue between the researchers and the political bodies representing the communities. The efforts of this phase of research are oriented to answering the question; *should this project be explored in greater depth with the community at large*? If there is an expression of interest in the project as it is conceived at this early stage then more elaborate discussions can begin.

2. Explore the operation of a research relationship

The formation of a working group comprised of researchers and community representatives is an effective way to sharpen the research project definition and community–researcher relationships. It is important to balance the working group with people who carry the diversity of opinions within the community. It should also include the community members most immediately affected by the project and/or the issue under examination. At this stage the working group objectives are still exploratory; what are the issues as defined by the local context and by the research community? What form will the community's participation take? What kind of training is required for the project? What kinds of training would the community benefit from? How will information be circulated between the community and the researchers and vice versa? It is common for people within Aboriginal communities and for researchers to fall into negotiation mode in this process. While there may be elements of negotiation in the working group encounter, it is important to maintain a focus on generating new ideas and sharing perspectives.

2. Explore the operation of a research relationship.
   a. Include as many different opinions as possible.
   b. Include members of the community most directly affected.
   c. Brainstorm as many questions to be answered as possible.
   d. The only outcome which will apply to all communities is the right to be aware of research affecting them and a say in its organization.



In some instances communities will not conceptualize the problem in the same way, will not recognize a problem, or reject the interpretation of the problem by the researcher. It may also be the case that there is no local expertise on the problem. What constitutes an acceptable level of community participation varies according to the local investment in the project outcome, availability of people and resources, research fatigue and a host of other factors. At its most basic level, community-based participatory research (CBPR) is the right for communities to be aware of research which takes place on their lands and with their people, and to have a say in its organization. Community level participation is variable, and may consist largely of admin-

istrative and logistical work, or it may take the form of popular mobilization around the issue. While it is incumbent on researchers to establish working relationships which do not alienate people from the research taking place, it is also important to respect the right of people not to be involved.

3. Develop a working proposal for community participation around the research issue

Once the working group has established some operational principles, these should be put to paper. The Dene Cultural Institute recommends that a Research Agreement Model be drawn up by the researchers and the communities involved (Masazumi and Quirk 1993). This describes the understandings of the researchers and the community about the purpose, methods, scope, training, distribution and communications strategy of the research along with guidelines for informed consent, confidentiality, and external media use. Issues around data ownership and publication should also be worked out at this point. Specific mechanisms for dealing with conflicting interpretations or inappropriate use of data should also have been established at this phase of the relationship and included in the written agreement.



3. Develop a working model for community participation around the research issue.

The Dene Cultural Institute has developed one of the many useful models for this agreement. Once the written agreement is in place, the community should be informed of the research and the content of the agreement. Every avenue should be used to ensure that the larger community is informed and has a chance to respond.

4. Do the research.
   a. Create a Local Advisory Committee (LAC) to oversee elements of the research.

At this point the community at large should be informed about the relationship. The information can take a variety of forms and the most appropriate choices will likely be determined by the Aboriginal members of the working group. Possibilities include the use of local radio, public information meetings, posters, and printed flyers. The public should be given an opportunity to comment on the proposed project if they want to. The local administrative and government organizations should be informed if they are not already. The local political representatives should be given adequate information to inform their constituents about the project and to debate its merits.

4. Do the research

Once the research protocol, methods and objectives have been agreed to and the community members have been informed the project enters the operational phase. The challenge at this point is to maintain the dialogue between the community and the researchers. One of the most effective ways to maintain a constructive research relationship is to have a local advisory committee (LAC) to work with. The LAC can oversee implementation of the research protocol agreement, identify the people who will work with the researchers and manage the information flow between the community and the researchers, provided they are kept adequately informed. Throughout the research progress reports should be made available to the LAC and the community.

b. Give the LAC clear responsibilities.
c. Provide them with progress reports to share with the community.
d. Give the LAC sufficient authority to influence the research in response to community concerns.

5. Interpret and communicate the research results.

Allow the members of the community to contribute their own interpretations of the research to the final results.



LACs should have clearly defined mandates and members should represent the diversity within the population. Their role should include critical review of all phases of the project and the ability to voice concerns raised within the community. Additional roles would be established as each project and community warrant. Guidelines should be established on how the committee's decisions will be taken up by researchers. In most cases the LACs will keep the projects locally relevant and allow for more effective communication with the community at large. However, if problems do arise with the community's perception of the project the committee must have enough power to implement appropriate action. If not then they may be seen by others in the community as co-opted by the researchers.

5. Interpret and communicate the research results

The interpretation of research results from many pure science disciplines would seem at first glance to be a highly technical task not prone to com-

munity involvement. However, in community-based participatory research (CBPR) there is attention to the context of scientific work, as discussed in the first section of this paper, and it is often the different perspectives on the context brought forward by the community that can influence interpretation. Researchers should present the findings and their perspective of what they mean to the local advisory committee (LAC) or the community as a whole. Very often alternative views of the implications will be brought up. Taking into account the implications from the local perspective — and communicating these outside — can help advance the specific goals of the community. There are thus two levels of communication to be considered: relating the findings within the community and disseminating those findings externally. A good CBPR design will be able to accommodate the perspectives of the people involved in the research in the latter.



6. Report the findings and wrap up the project.
   a. Where appropriate, either the full report or a summary of it should be translated into the local language for the information of the community members.
   b. Provide the community with results they can use.
   c. Ensure that community members know when the research is finished.
   d. Arrange a last meeting between the local advisory committee LAC and the researchers to assess the process and the results.

6. Report the findings, wrap up the project

As a project draws to its conclusion there are two elements to consider in disseminating the research findings. The first is to make sure that the results are made known within the community and the second is the management of publications derived from the research. Reporting to the community should include executive summaries of reports, if not the final reports in entirety, translated into the local language. The reports should highlight findings in a form that local organizations can use to pursue their own goals. Additionally the end of the CBPR project should be publicly indicated so that people will know the process is complete. Too often people are not made aware that a project is completed and are given the impression that things are left hanging. The LAC and the researchers should meet a final time to decide if the initial objectives match the final results of the project, and if the

requirements of the research agreement model used were met by the community and the researchers.

Researchers are normally obliged in CBPR to provide draft copies of publications and reports to the community for their comment. Communities may require a review role in publications and other forms of research result dissemination. They may require the right to edit or veto publications derived from research. Academic researchers should at least be open to providing publication opportunities to alternative interpretations and dissenting opinions. If the mechanisms for supporting the dissemination of divergent interpretations are established early in the research process an outright veto may be avoided. In well conducted CBPR the people in the community are involved in generating the results and assisting the researchers with interpretation. This is more likely to result in mutually agreed research conclusions and their publication.

e. Provide the community with draft copies of all documents derived from the research and its results for their comments. While the researchers' conclusions have their own validity, community members should be given an opportunity to publicly express dissenting views.
f. Maintain a relationship with the community after the research is finished, bearing in mind that results may raise as many new questions as answers.



This should not mark the end of the relationship between the researchers and the community. Some questions may be answered but inevitably new ones are formulated. At this final point the researchers and the LAC should identify what those questions are, how and if they can be addressed. If the research relationship has functioned well, providing tangible benefits to the everyone, this is the time to build on that relationship and move forward into new realms of knowledge and understanding.

Suggestions for Implementing CBPR Relationships with Aboriginal Communities

The remainder of this report presents some practical suggestions for establishing and conducting a community-based participatory research (CBPR) relationship with Aboriginal communities.

Make the community the meeting ground for discussing the research

This is both a demonstration of the researcher's genuine interest in working closely with the community and a way to address issues of power between researchers and the community. Universities and government offices can be intimidating places; meeting in the community gives people access to whatever resources they may need locally.

Treat each community and project as unique

No two communities are the same just as no two research projects are. A respect for the uniqueness of each community and research situation avoids the cookie cutter approach to community relations which are ultimately counterproductive.



Respect local political structures and processes

It is important that CBPR relationships build on the framework for decision making that exists within the community. Research relationships may undermine local authority structures through a lack of awareness about how decisions are made locally. In some places, consensus management is the normal operating procedure. The process of consensus happens in informal social interactions which are not obvious to outsiders. Once achieved, consensus may be formalized through familiar bureaucratic practices of meetings, motions and minutes. If researchers anticipate bureaucratic action they may interpret its absence as evidence of "nothing happening." The temptation to make something happen by trying to impose a specific kind of action can interrupt an ongoing process of decision making.

Suggestions for Researchers

1. Make the community the meeting ground for discussing research. Remember that offices can be intimidating.
2. Treat each community and project as unique. An agreement that is satisfactory to one community may not suit another.
3. Respect local political structures and processes. Many Aboriginal communities achieve action through consensus, which is not as visible to outsiders as the decisions of bureaucracy.
4. Recognize informal authority within the community. It is as important to have the support of Elders as the

Recognize informal authority within the community

In some cases, Aboriginal communities have different and co-existing

authority structures. Some are formal and bureaucratically organized, like band councils; others are informal and draw from local principles of social organization for legitimacy. For example, respected Elders may be consulted by the official leadership before decisions are finalized. Researchers who are unaware of the informal authority structures may not recognize their importance. In developing a research relationship it is often productive to learn about the informal leadership, inviting these individuals into the community overview process. They can be valuable contributors to the research process and help build relationships within the community.

support of official community leaders.

5. Make your research objectives clear. Even the appearance of ulterior motives can be damaging to the research relationship.
6. Work out a reasonable and locally relevant timetable. The timeframes of deadlines and schedules that many researchers are constrained by have no relevance in Aboriginal communities. Attempts to force the timing of meetings or interviews may be perceived as coercion.
7. Listen closely. If an idiomatic expression is confusing, ask a member of the community for clarification.



Transparency of research objectives

It is critical to be completely open about the motives for the research, the funding sources supporting it, the people involved and so on. The appearance of ulterior motives in research can have a very damaging impact on the relationship with the community. Be prepared to provide copies of grant proposals, correspondence with the granting agencies and letters of support to people who are involved in the project.

Work out a reasonable and locally relevant timetable

It is important to allow sufficient time for the community to digest the information flowing from the research throughout the duration of the project. Time frames should allow for cultural and linguistic differences that may make communication slower than researchers would like or anticipate. Academic and fiscal calendars are largely irrelevant in Aboriginal communities: important seasonal and local events must be taken into account, even when they are unexpected. If people feel coerced into attending meetings relations with the community will be strained. Allow the community to establish the sequence and timing of events. Build in enough flexibility to accommodate unexpected events.

Listen closely

People in Aboriginal communities keenly feel that their opinions have not been sought, or have had little impact, in the decisions that have affected them in the past. In a community-based participatory research (CBPR) relationship it is very important to listen attentively to what is being said and how the information is communicated. Idiomatic expressions may be clear to other people in the community but confusing to the researchers. Most southern based researchers anticipate direct expressions of first person opinions. If those are not forthcoming, or if they are given narratives about things and times seemingly unconnected to the issue at hand, it can be difficult to interpret what is going on. It is often fruitful to ask for a cultural interpretation of these kinds of discourses so that their meanings and implications for the research can be worked out.



If responses seem unconnected to the questions, ask if there is a cultural significance you are missing.

8. Make research relevant to local priorities and goals. Flexibility in research design is helpful in clarifying community research interests.
9. Use culturally appropriate research methods. People in communities should not be treated as objects to be studied closely but as human being with feelings. Take the time to gain an awareness of the cultural norms in communication. Discover, before research begins, what topics are considered sensitive and how people are accustomed to communi-

Articulate research with local priorities and goals

A common critique of research in the past was that it met the interests of a select group of people and had little or no local relevance. CBPR is designed to provide materials and tools for people to address their own information needs as well as those of the researcher. Consultations with community members should include an overview of issues that particular researchers may be able to address with the skills they possess. Approaching community based research with flexibility in the research design is helpful in articulating research interests.

Use culturally appropriate research tools

Communities perceive researchers treating people as objects to be scrutinized rather than as human beings with feelings. Culturally

inappropriate measures can also cause emotional harm to people. Researchers must develop methods that do not provoke new resentment or pain from earlier events. A sensitivity to local issues and cultural norms is critical. These issues should be explored early in the process of building a research relationship with Aboriginal communities. In the case of questionnaires, it is important to recognize that in many Aboriginal communities anonymity and the generalization of information are foreign concepts. People do not, for the most part, live in isolation from the people around them, as people in cities do, but in dense multi-generational webs of interpersonal knowledge and significance. Questionnaires that investigate sensitive topics — and what constitutes a sensitive topic can vary considerably between communities and peoples — may provoke reactions despite assurances of anonymity. Communicative norms may prohibit direct questions, certain topics may be considered offensive, or questions can access information that doesn't make sense in the milieu of a particular community. Take enough time to frame questions in an appropriate way and make the need for the information clear to avoid problems.

cate and process information.

10. Maintain confidentiality. Many Aboriginal communities have small populations, making it more difficult to hide the identity of respondents. Photographs should not be published in any form without signed permission from the appropriate people.
11. Design a strategy for fully reporting research results. A community should receive a report which relates to their research needs, is written in the local language, relies as little as possible on technical terms, and is readily available to the greatest number of people.



Confidentiality

The ethical requirements surrounding confidentiality of data gathered from human subjects are critical in CBPR relationships. The small numbers of people living in many Aboriginal communities make it easier to identify individuals than in larger populations. Masking identities in published material and reports should extend to photographs and other representations of life in the community. Many Aboriginal people and communities have found themselves, or people they know, in the pages of magazines, text books and other materials without their knowledge.

Published photographs of artifacts, people and sacred places should all be accompanied with signed permission to use forms. The local advisory committee will be able to indicate which photos require permissions and who to get them from.

Design a comprehensive dissemination strategy

A clearly defined and manageable strategy for reporting results should accompany any community-based participatory research (CBPR) project. The minimum requirements are: the community's research needs, the level of technical competence people hold, returning the most information to the largest number of people, and availability in the local language. This is an integral part of the research process and should be funded accordingly. In addition to executive summaries and reports researchers should consider innovative approaches based on the kind of research and the community's interests. In some cases posters in public areas may be appropriate and community radio phone in shows are often productive.



12. Be realistic about the significance and the impact of the research. Creating false or unrealistic hopes destroys the trust of a community.
13. Establish mechanisms to deal with misunderstandings. This is one of the areas where the local advisory committee can be very helpful.
14. Provide opportunities for people to voice their concerns throughout the research process. If people are reluctant to approach the researcher directly, members of the local advisory committee can act as intermediaries.
15. Approach the relationship with community participation as a com-

Be realistic about the significance and impact of research

It is important to keep the implications of the research in a realistic perspective. Too often people's hopes have been raised only to be dashed by reality. Communities have been the recipients of unwanted change brought about by experts who have the power to act in the interests of outsiders.

Establish mechanisms to deal with misunderstandings

Even the best laid out CBPR project can produce misunderstandings or otherwise create difficulties within a community. Working with the local advisory committee to establish a protocol for handling objections to the research is the most effective way to manage this issue.

Give people an avenue to voice concerns throughout the research process

Communication should always be two-way in CBPR. A good approach is to make use of the communication systems already in place. Asking the local advisory board to be a conduit for people in the research process is a good approach.

Approach the relationship with the community participation as a commitment

A CBPR relationship makes participation the focal point, rather than a minor element, of the research process. Appropriate resources need to be allocated in the project design to maintain a CBPR relationship and hire people who have the skills to implement it.



Work at communicating information in locally relevant terms

Look for local idioms and metaphors that provide grounded examples of the information collected through the research. Approach the communication of research at all phases as an opportunity to do public education. Take advantage of local information sources; go on the community radio, write information pieces for the local newsletter, paper or other publications. Always have a translator available to help with these efforts. Research results which come in a cultural and linguistic form familiar to the communities will be appreciated and useful to them.

Don't folklorize local understanding and discourses

The way people live in Aboriginal communities does not form a package of readily consumable beliefs and traditions. The way that all people live and make sense of the world is deeply ingrained and highly personal. Treat those ways with respect and develop a genuine interest in people's lives.

mitment. There is a difference between "taking local concerns into consideration" and ensuring that local concerns are woven into the fabric of the research.

16. Work at communicating information in locally relevant terms. At each stage of the research process, it is important to share the information being collected in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways.
17. Don't make folklore out of local understandings and ideas. A genuine interest in the lives of the community will help create proper respect for their culture.

Leave something behind in the community

Historically, Aboriginal communities have provided a great deal of information to researchers and received very little in return. The researcher, on the other hand, benefits from the research through career advancement, salary and so on. Research projects should contain elements of benefit to the community or the individuals involved. Training research assistants or other community members in specific skills can provide a lasting benefit of the project. Similarly, researchers can offer their skills as consultants to the community in gratitude for their participation.



Document the research process

Building a research relationship and undertaking a project is a learning experience for everyone involved. While each project is unique, the lessons learned in the process are valuable to the community and to other researchers. A report or other documentation of the life of the CBPR relationship can be useful to everyone concerned and for others down the line.

18. Leave something behind in the community. Offer your services as a consultant, create training programs as part of your research, ensure that the community benefits from the process and results of the research as much as you will.
19. Document the research process. Keeping a record of decisions made and challenges met will help the next research project the community undertakes, as well as your next project.
20. Recognize local contributions. Any publications which results from the research should, in whatever way is appropriate to the circumstances,

Recognize local contributions

Researchers get recognition in print for their work but the people in the Aboriginal communities who provide the information, and allow the work to take place, do not. This is another concern that should be addressed in the early phases of a research relationship. Balancing confidentiality with acknowledgment can be complex. If confidentiality granted to participants precludes naming the main contributors, blanket acknowledgment of the role of participants should be made clear. In situations where specific individuals have acted as co-investigators within the community they should be included as named authors in reports and publications if they are interested in this kind of recognition.

Report regularly to the community

The typical research cycle has a large time gap between data collection and the dissemination of results. If little feedback is made to the community during the analysis period people wonder what has happened to the researchers and what is going on with the project. It is as important to maintain regular contact with the community once data have been collected as it is in the intensity of interaction with the community during the collection phase.

acknowledge the contributions made by the community.

21. Report regularly to the community. Once the data are being analyzed, keep the community informed of the possible results and implications.
22. Support local control over the research. It may be appropriate to make the local community officials responsible for dispersal and accounting of the local portion of the research budget. Local control over some part of the research process shows local political support of the project. This is reassuring to community members.

Support local control over the research



Be prepared to have the local band council, hamlet office, community council or nation office handle the local part of the budget. The extension of control over research by Aboriginal communities covers activities within the communities and their lands. Community control over the budget also demonstrates to participants that the research is supported by the local political structure.

Provide appropriate compensation to participants and collaborators

Specialized information held by a group of people is accumulated through generations of observation. Consequently, Elders and other local experts should be treated as consultants and rewarded appropriately. These costs should be built into the project design. Normally the local organizations supporting the research project will help identify participants and set fee scales. They will also often be responsible for reimbursement for participants from the project funds. A word of caution: payment for information can introduce an element of coercion into people's decisions to participate in a research project. An analogous situation in the past saw the sale of sacred objects to museum collectors by people on the brink of survival. In normal times those items would

never have been given up and their absence caused harm to the groups in question.

Observe intellectual property rights

Research projects that deal with a cultural body of knowledge should recognize that knowledge is not evenly distributed within a community. They should also establish mechanisms to maintain the privileged nature of the knowledge where appropriate. Internationally, the knowledge issue has provoked considerable debate about intellectual property rights and the ability of Indigenous peoples to maintain control over information, samples, and other data once they have been collected.



23. Provide appropriate compensation to participants and collaborators. Elders and local experts should be compensated as consultants. Be aware of the danger of payment for information becoming a form of coercion.
24. Observe intellectual property rights. Not everyone within a community shares the same knowledge.
25. Establish in advance how data will be controlled and managed.



Establish how data will be controlled and managed

There are increasing efforts in Aboriginal communities to exert control and ownership over data collected on their lands and with their people. The issue of data ownership is a very complex issue for researchers who are often bound by academic conventions to make data publicly available. It is in everyone's interest to establish a clear protocol for data management before research has begun. Storage, distribution and confidentiality protocols should all be established before data collection begins.

Respect the social dynamics of the community

Communities may have internal divisions that make it difficult for some people to work together. Specific kin relations may prohibit some forms of interaction. These issues should be worked out before the research begins.

Conclusion

Research in Aboriginal communities in a community-based participatory research (CBPR) framework requires that specific attention be paid to the historical developments that led to the situation people in those communities find themselves in today. People who conduct research in areas that touch on the lands and lives of Aboriginal peoples should be prepared to approach their work as a small piece of a much larger effort at community development and renewal. CBPR is one tool that can aid in that effort. By engaging people in the communities as participants in the research who have rights and obligations the difficulties of the past relationship with researchers can be largely avoided. CBPR is not a system which, if properly implemented, produces the desired results. It is an applied philosophy that requires judicious use of common sense and situational flexibility on the part of everyone concerned. This paper provided an overview of the context of the development of CBPR, an outline of a framework for establishing a CBPR relationship with Aboriginal communities, and a series of practical suggestions for researchers who are interested in working on a CBPR project.

Published research results should be approved by the community before publication.

26. Respect the social dynamics of the community. It may be necessary to hold more group sessions than planned, or impossible to hold any, depending on the cultural norms of the community.





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Additional Resources

Community-based participatory research with balanced community–researcher partnerships should benefit Aboriginal communities. The policy implications which need to be pursued include lobbying for research funding to support this way of research, i.e., a longer time period for call for proposals because establishing the partnership and refining the research question requires more time; a longer period of funding to allow for undertaking the research project. Journals should consider accepting joint reporting of results and ways of including different interpretations of results, including possible dissension at the time of publication. Universities should appreciate that this research may take longer due to the partnership negotiations, that a larger team will lead to multi-authored papers and slower rates of publication, which in turn may impact on junior faculty having difficulties in academic advancement.

The following are some references that indicate recent developments in CBPR. Please note these are references predominantly for Canada. There is also very significant movement in Australia and New Zealand with detailed guidelines for CBPR which are all web-based.

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A Community Comment

What I liked about this was all the writing in the inserts. Then you know what is being said instead of the words in the main part. I think the inserts give the framework of what these people were doing. When I am saying this I want you to think about that man who was picked up on 163 street and he was Native. They thought he was drunk and they put him in detox for 10 hours and instead he had had a stroke. What I got out of this article is the way that white people are willing to change for Natives, Eskimos, Métis, to make things better for them. We forget that people are all human.

I read the main text as well as the inserts. The inserts helped with understanding the main text. I felt the inserts showed that researchers are on the right road for a change, the road to better understanding. Wording wasn't a problem. When people are coming to interview Native people, the thing of the thinking is that we're so stupid that we don't know anything because we're not talking, it's not our way to talk.

The basic framework set-up was a good idea and helpful. It helps communities to understand what they can do to be more effective in cooperating with research. A Local Advisory Committee is a great idea to start the process of trust. We're all learning and to make it better we have to create new ways of doing things. The emphasis on community was wonderful. This is an article that takes an important first step toward better understanding. I read it right through and wanted more. People need to understand each other.

I thought about some of the books I had to read about breast cancer and Native writers who wrote and tried to understand how cancer was affecting their family. We have to start with the family. The Native writers made it easier for me to understand. I tried to put myself in their shoes. I felt they were understanding. They weren't talking too much about things that we don't talk about, like community secrets. They talked about ways of coping that I know and could understand.