

Ethical Research Engagement with Indigenous Youth: Seven Requirements

From the Indigenous Youth Voices Report,
A Way Forward in Conducting Research With and By Indigenous Youth

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In partnership with the First Nations Child & Family Caring Society, Indigenous Youth Voices conducted community-based research and released a report on the topic of conducting research with and for Indigenous youth. The final report, *A Way Forward in Conducting Research With and By Indigenous Youth*, offers a path towards rethinking and reshaping research that is meaningful, respectful and inclusive of Indigenous youth. This factsheet summarizes seven requirements for conducting ethical research with Indigenous youth.

“When done in a respectful and meaningful way, research has the potential to uplift Indigenous youth and can be used for the betterment of communities.”

1. Accessibility



CONTENT: Research must be accessible, from the initial stages of the project to the dissemination of results. Research needs to be developed and delivered in language that is accessible for Indigenous youth. This includes Indigenous languages and language that is not simply written in academic terms.



SUGGESTIONS

- Create a plain language glossary of terms
- Work with youth to create relevant messaging and content using mediums that resonate with them

PARTICIPATION: Researchers have a responsibility to work with Indigenous youth to identify and overcome barriers that prevent meaningful youth participation. Some of these barriers include transportation, child care, and fair compensation for the time and energy Indigenous youth spend.



SUGGESTION

- Ensure that research proposals include a youth participation budget for food, transportation, honoraria/pay etc.

2. Indigenous Youth Developing and Leading Research



Research must work in ways that uplift Indigenous youth and build their communities. As much as possible, research must be beneficial to the resurgence of Indigenous cultures, ceremonies, languages and stories. Researchers have a responsibility to work with youth to change narratives.



SUGGESTIONS

- Make space to include Indigenous youth as collaborators with clearly defined roles, not just subjects of research. Co-create the research process from designing the methodology to interpreting the results. This might mean letting go of preconceived ideas and some control!



3. Holistic Approaches



Research must include the entire community and be inclusive of the diversity found within Indigenous communities. Indigenous youth indicated that researchers have a responsibility in ensuring that Two-Spirit and LGBTQ+ youth, as well as Elders, children, youth and families all need to be meaningfully included.



SUGGESTIONS

- Ask youth for guidance on who should be involved in the research and the best ways to meaningfully involve them in the research process.
- Ensure that all involved in the research feel safe and supported in participating; this includes support and follow-up for youth after meetings and after the research process is complete



4. Indigenous Youth Defined Research Ethics



Research must uphold the respect, safety and dignity of Indigenous youth as defined by youth themselves. While the ethics that provide the baseline for this are found in such documents as the [Tri-Council Policy Statement](#), research ethics must be defined by the youth themselves with respect to their distinct needs.



SUGGESTION

- Develop a consent-based process with Indigenous youth at the start of your research. Youth should feel they have control and jurisdiction over the process, including the ability to stop the research process entirely if need be.

5. Reciprocity



Relationship-building and a sense of reciprocity must be the cornerstone of research. Indigenous youth made it clear that researchers must have a sense of responsibility and accountability that extends beyond the limitations of a specific research project. This includes building trusting and meaningful relationships before research begins to ensure that relationships are maintained past the end of the research. Indigenous youth see this as an important mechanism in ensuring that researchers begin to value and define youth for their resilience and successes.



SUGGESTION

→ Build trust by spending time with the community members to learn about them as well as the community, participating in community activities and/or ceremonies (if invited to do so), etc.

6. Community-Led and Culturally Specific



Research must include the capacity for communities to lead and define the research themselves. Relying on “distinctions-based” approaches does not honour cultural specificity nor the diversity of youth experiences found within First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities. Research must be led by trusted researchers and conducted in a culturally specific manner as defined by the community. Elders and Knowledge Holders should be respected and valued for the specific knowledges they hold.



SUGGESTION

→ Take the time to learn about the culture and language of the community from youth, Elders and Knowledge Holders.

7. Support the Implementation of TRC Call to Action 66



Indigenous youth have indicated that the best way to contribute to building capacity with Indigenous young people is by supporting the implementation of TRC Call to Action 66. Multi-year funding and support for grassroots Indigenous youth organizations is integral to the wellbeing of Indigenous youth.



SUGGESTION

→ Read the report by Indigenous Youth Voices, [*A Roadmap to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #66*](#)