

# SHIFTING LANDSCAPES

A Protocol Guide for Building Long-Term Research Relationships in Oklahoma Indian Country



**SOUTH CENTRAL**  
CLIMATE SCIENCE CENTER



# Shifting Landscapes:

## A Guide to Developing Academic and Research Relationships in Oklahoma Indian Country

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# Shifting Landscapes: A Guide to Developing Academic and Research Relationships in Oklahoma Indian Country

During Summer 2015, a small team of administrators, scientists, and interns from both the University of Oklahoma’s (OU) Center for Research Program Development and Enrichment (CRPDE) and the South Central Climate Adaptation Science Center (CASC) began working on the document before you.

The purpose of this work was to provide tools, resources, and other materials necessary for non-Native scholars, researchers, faculty members, and government employees to better understand, reach out to, and build collaborative relationships with those who share an affiliation with Oklahoma Indian Country.

Over the course of several months, team members each took sections, drafted them, and then shared them with others. The resulting document was revised and then later shared with Native staff members from both the American Indian Institute and Oklahoma Established Program to Stimulate Competitive Research (EPSCoR). This step was critical to ensuring that a Native perspective informed the document. The document underwent further revisions before being turned over to graphic designers, who provided the design and layout. The document was then reviewed by other individuals at higher administrative and government levels and appropriate revisions made.

We began conducting presentations on the material in the fall of 2016; however, we continued to make revisions to the document until it was completed in Summer 2020.

This document is a living one, and we plan to continue revising as its material ages.

## Acknowledgements

Those who contributed to the content or design include: Nic Carter (Chickasaw Nation and South Central CASC), Scott Ketchum (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma and EPSCoR), Taylor Lawrence (Chickasaw Nation and South Central CASC), Renee McPherson, (OU and South Central CASC), Norma Neely (Citizen Potawatomi Nation, OU, and American Indian Institute), Christiaan Patterson (OU and South Central CASC).

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# Shifting Landscapes: A Guide to Developing Academic and Research Relationships in Oklahoma Indian Country

## Introduction

As non-Native researchers in Indian Country, you inherit a legacy. This document is designed to help you understand and grapple with that legacy.

The content of this document is organized into four sections, or Organizing Principles (OP):

- **Historical Context (OP1)**
- **Principles (OP2)**
- **Collaboration (OP3)**
- **Protocols (OP4)**

Each section will contend with a different aspect of the legacy left behind by colonialism and non-Native researchers. It will describe how this legacy should inform your work today, starting with historical context and moving into principles, methods, and, eventually, protocols.

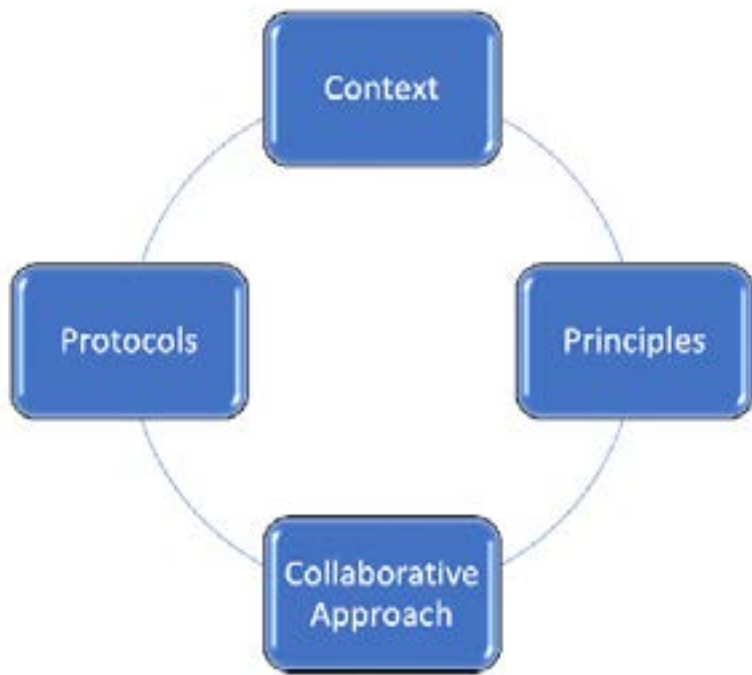


Diagram depicting the four Operating Principles (OP) of this document.

## Note on our Use of Anecdotes

You’ll see anecdotes pop up from time to time in the body of this text. We’ve taken this approach out of respect for the fact that, like Indian Country itself, the experiences and approaches of those who work in Indian Country are diverse enough that many of the lessons learned are not easily generalizable. These personal stories will help ground some of the more abstract discussions in this document.

In our opinion, the bare essence of this text, and our approach to working in Indian Country as a whole, can be described as “be sensitive and pay attention.” Be sensitive to differences in tribal nations. Pay attention to how you’re being perceived. Be sensitive to the impacts, intended and unintended, of your research on the nations you work with. Pay attention to how others are behaving. There’s no prescription for success here, only a framework; but these anecdotes should help you get a clearer sense of how context, principles, methods, and protocols play out in practice.

It’s worth noting, as well, that much of the discussion in this guidebook will be of the harsh realities and abuses inflicted upon Native peoples at the hands of Euro-Americans and their institutions, including academia. Learning about and contending with this information will likely be uncomfortable, but both this information and the discomfort itself are important parts of the process. The point of talking about these things is not to scare you or dissuade you from doing research. Nor is the point of discussing protocols to imply that you will fail in your research if you do not follow them precisely. The point, rather, is how the historical context shapes underlying principles and perspectives, and how these play out in research relationships. Taken seriously, these principles and perspectives are what ultimately will guide you to make the right choices when you approach your research and your relationships.

-Todd and Atty



## Operating Principle 1: Historical Context

Non-Native scholars and researchers who seek to build research relationships with Indian Nations<sup>1</sup> in Oklahoma must be aware of the specific circumstances of the Nation they intend to work with, as well as the overall history of interactions between Native people and Euro-Americans (and their institutions.)

Because of both the historical narrative shared between Natives and non-Natives and the legacy of historical trauma, continued abuses, and colonization by “Western” institutions, most outsiders seeking to develop a relationship with an Indian Nation should expect to experience a broad range of reactions to their presence on Native Land, including (though not exclusively) suspicion, mistrust, calculated (or spontaneous) misinformation, inaccurate sources, etc. These reactions should not be taken as personal indictments, rather as justified reactions to centuries of mistreatment by those who operate under the same title as you.

In order to understand how to work in this environment, you must first understand who your partners are and how colonialism has affected them, their nation, and their life ways. This section, “Historical Context” (OP1), will provide the background and reasoning underpinning the principles of ethical research relationships, collaborative methodologies, and research protocols. OP1 is divided into three distinct sections:

### 1.1 History, Culture, and Difference

### 1.2 Understanding Tribal Sovereignty in Context

### 1.3 History of Research in Indian Country

Each section will grapple with some element of the historical and cultural context that you are stepping into as a researcher in Indian Country. Section 1.1 is predominantly concerned with the landscape of Tribal Nations in Oklahoma; the social, political, and cultural features that distinguish them from one another; and the historical events that led to their modern presence in Oklahoma. Section 1.2 will provide a deeper dive into tribal sovereignty, examining what it is, how we talk about it, and why it is relevant to your research. Section 1.3 will round out this chapter by describing some of the many instances when non-Native researchers and academics have acted as harmful instruments of colonialism, and how you can avoid these tendencies moving into the future.

<sup>1</sup> While it’s typically best to refer to individuals by their tribal affiliation, in some cases, when conducting research and presenting research – either in journal articles or presentations – it is necessary to refer to Native people as a collective entity. For example, political bodies often use the term “Indian Country,” and are more likely to use the term “American Indian” or “Native Nations,” while academics and those in the non-profit sector often prefer terms like “Indigenous people.” To navigate this issue, listen carefully to the preferred term of those you work with and be flexible with your usage. When in doubt, use terms that let the listener draw their own circle around the group you’re referring to, like “Native community.”

## 1.1 History, Culture, and Difference

### Square One: Similarity and Difference

Thirty-nine (39) distinctly different Indian Nations reside within the current borders of present-day Oklahoma. For a few Indian Nations, Oklahoma is part of their traditional homelands (Caddo, Comanche, Kiowa, Wichita; Appendix A). However, for most tribes, Oklahoma is far removed from their places of origin – often by thousands of miles (see Appendix B to learn more about the 39 Indian Nations across Oklahoma).

The Indian Nations within Oklahoma are not the same. They are not interchangeable. A diverse range of languages, architectures, agricultures, spiritualities, and cosmologies exist from one nation to another. As such, Indian nations in Oklahoma (and elsewhere) can be thought of as separate sovereign nations having government-to-government relationships with the United States.

Most Indian Nations in Oklahoma share a central narrative of forced removal. That is, they have in common:

- **Coerced ceding of traditional homelands to the U.S. government. Most tribal nations continue to hold their traditional homelands as sacred and have vested interests in these places, especially with concern to cultural resources.**
- **The “exchanging” of their traditional homelands for promises of goods and services (education, healthcare, etc. – with no guarantee of quality or timeliness) and their relocation to reservations in Oklahoma.**
- **Continuing to deal with the ramifications and chaos of the resulting historical trauma.**



Allen Houser's (Chiricahua Apache) "Sacred Rain Arrow." For more information on this piece: <https://collections.gilcrease.org/object/0827185>



Flags or Seals of the Tribes in Oklahoma

Flag of the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma unavailable



Absentee Shawnee Tribe



Alabama-Quassarte Tribal Town



Apache Tribe of Oklahoma



Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma



Kaw Nation



Kialegee Tribal Town



Caddo Nation



Cherokee Nation



Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes



Kiowa Tribe



Miami Nation



Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma



Chickasaw Nation



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



Citizen Potawatomi Nation



Muscogee (Creek) Nation



Osage Nation



Otoe-Missouria Tribe



Comanche Nation



Delaware Nation



Delaware Tribe of Indians



Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma



Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma



Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma



Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma



Euclidean (Yuchi) Tribe of Indians



Fort Sill Apache Tribe



Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma



Quapaw Nation



Sac and Fox Nation



Seminole Nation of Oklahoma



Seneca-Cayuga Nation



Shawnee Tribe





Thlopthlocco Tribal Town



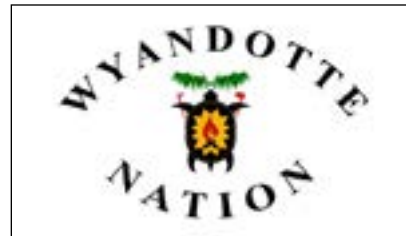
Tonkawa Tribe



United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians



Wichita and Affiliated Tribes



Wyandotte Nation

## How We Got Here: The Legacy of Colonialism

The history of the oppression of the America's Native peoples contains not only innumerable, systematic, and varied efforts by European colonists and their descendants to extinguish their existence, individual identities, and political legitimacy, but also a deliberate and overwhelming ignorance on behalf of the general Euro-American populace of this history, and active, ongoing systems of oppression, of which this ignorance is a part.

Prior to the establishment of the United States, the Indigenous populations of North America and South America endured nearly 300 years of oppression and persecution at the hands of European "explorers" (colonists). The so-called "Age of Discovery" (ca. 1400 – ca. 1780) saw increased European maritime activity during which Native peoples, their lands and resources, and life ways were irrevocably altered through disease, war, and colonization. Once state-sponsored exploration co-mingled and joined forces with economic desires and so-called Christian missionaries, the fate of Native peoples in North America and South America crossed into an abyss from which it has not fully recovered. The motives of the Europeans and Euro-Americans interacting with Native peoples beginning in this period and continuing to this day have largely been for the purposes of extraction or exploitation of one kind or another, be it the economics of land, metals, food, slavery, or the "harvesting of souls" for God. Exploitation by academics for the purpose of research can be thought of as part of this same pattern. After the establishment of the United States, and with the presidency of Andrew Jackson (1829-1837), Tribal Nations in the south (Cherokee, Choctaw, Muscogee [Creek], Chickasaw, and Seminole) and elsewhere across the continent would endure the passage of the Indian Removal Act (1830). With its passage, those Indian Nations were uprooted from their traditional homelands and forced to march from the deep south to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma. Between 1830 and 1892, the 39 Nations now located in Oklahoma ceded lands, from Arizona to Florida and Oregon to Ohio.

## How We Got Here: From Practice to Policy

In the intervening years between the "official" conclusion of the "Indian Wars" (in 1890) and today, the U.S. Government's Indian policies can generally be described as either assimilationist or attempts at self-determination. Assimilationist policies can be thought of as policies that encourage or force Native people to abandon their cultural identity and life ways. Self-determination policies ostensibly provide avenues by which Tribal Nations and peoples can reclaim elements of self-governance and provide services that would otherwise be administered by the Federal Government. Both types of policies have been offered at various times as solutions to "the Indian Problem," and given the historical lack of involvement of Tribes in the development of these policies, both types have caused damage to Tribal sovereignty.

The federal appetite for these policies seems to operate like a pendulum. The Dawes Act (1887), for example, was a deliberate attempt to encourage Tribal members to assimilate and behave like White Americans by taking away communal Tribal ownership and dividing Tribal land into discreet parcels, 160 acres for each family. The first real policy identified as "self-determination," the Indian Reorganization Act (1934), ostensibly recognized the legitimacy and authority of Tribal governments to manage their own assets -- but only if the Tribal governments operated under a constitution drafted by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), which forced tribes to adopt non-Native systems of governance and ultimately de-legitimized traditional forms of leadership. Assimilationist policy returned full-force with the era of Tribal termination and abusive boarding schools. The pendulum swung back with the advent of the Indian Self Determination Act (1975), though predictably, this policy wasn't perfect either. This cycle continues today as modern U.S. Supreme Court cases and legislation flirt with the notion of eliminating the "Special Status" of Native Nations and eliminating their sovereign powers once and for all.

It is worth considering that many of the worst perpetrators of destructive policies would claim that theses policies were designed to benefit Tribal peoples. One of the main advocates of boarding schools (and the founder of the Carlisle Indian School), Captain Richard H. Pratt, whose well-known mantra was "Kill the Indian, save the man," sincerely believed that boarding schools were a net benefit to the children forced to attend them. The point of revealing their intentions is not to make excuses for or rehabilitate the reputations of those who take genocidal action against Native people, but rather to make the point that good intentions are not enough. At least with regards to colonizer actions towards Native people, well-intentioned but presumptive and poorly informed behavior often has done far more harm than good. This pattern is one of the primary reasons why

In 2018, the Trump Administration began contending that Tribes are a "race" rather than separate governments. Given the history of assimilation policy and denial of political legitimacy, how do you suppose this was perceived?

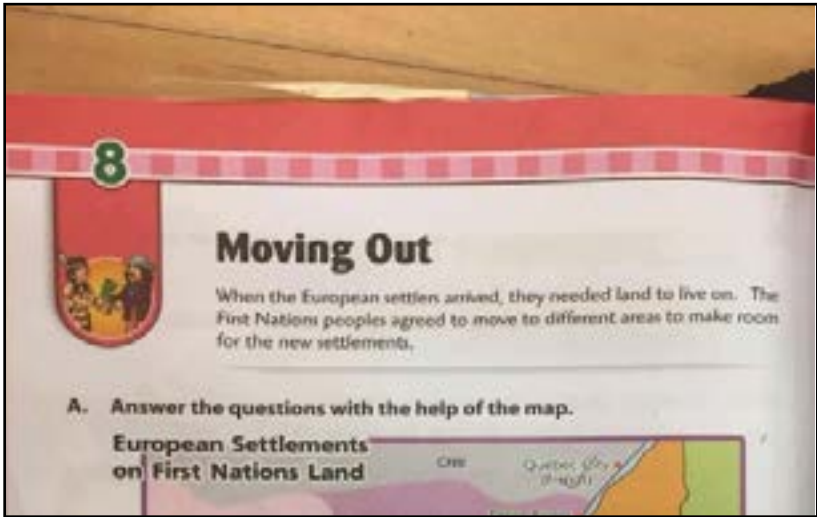


it is so critical to have a firm understanding of historical context before you begin developing research relationships.

Narratives

As non-Native people, most of you have been taught a specific (probably Euro-centric) narrative about the “discovery” and “settlement” of North America and South America. This narrative typically ignores the agency and life ways of the continent’s first inhabitants and their continual survival, instead preferring to consider them as “noble savages,” admirable but incomprehensible, a part of the land rather than distinct from it. Seeing Natives as a part of the land meant colonizers didn’t have to think of them as humans.

To be clear, before the arrival of non-Natives, the Indigenous inhabitants of the Americas conducted trade, manipulated the land in calculated ways, endured extreme wealth and tragic hardships, fought wars, survived climate shifts, and suffered epidemics and disease. While Native peoples have endured, the way this story is told and the way it reflects on their present existence is almost entirely outside their control. Native peoples in the United States, in particular, have been subject not only to the injustices and oppressions wrought upon them by colonialism, but also a deliberate ignorance and obfuscation of their history, people, and current status. Significant Native contributions to the cornerstones of Euro-American life have been ignored (see Jazz, Literature, Politics, Law, Medicine, Popular Music, Film, Acting, Football, Baseball, the FBI, etc.). Native religions and art have been co-opted, commercialized, and replicated without permission, and their authenticity and political legitimacy has become subject to the approval of the public and the Federal Government. When contemporary Native voices reach the mainstream, they often become clouded and overshadowed by others.



Example of how teaching guides have sanitized what actually occurred across the Americas.

Contemporary oppression of Native Peoples continues. America has not been decolonized, and as you will learn, the very institutions you represent have participated and continue to participate in this oppression.



Example of how our art or its textual descriptions have focused on Euro-American perspectives rather than those of Indigenous People.

Features of Tribal Identity

Each specific Indian Nation (e.g., Pawnee, Comanche, Chickasaw, Osage, Cherokee, Wichita) has a distinct culture and sovereign identity. “Culture” is an umbrella term covering a huge range of ideas, traditions, perspectives, and activities, but this section will contend with some of the most recognizable cultural elements of Oklahoma’s Native Nations, including language, kinship systems, belief systems (religion and ceremonies), creative expression (art, stories, music, dance, even clothes), political order, and Native science. By doing so, we hope to convey the incredible diversity that exists within the tribal nations of Oklahoma, as well as key you into some of the pertinent features that you might want to be aware of as you develop relationships. A researcher well-equipped with knowledge of some of these specific features of the community with which they are working can act as a more effective partner than one without. If you intend to work with a particular community, you should identify some of the features listed below and how they might intersect with your work in particular. Representatives of a particular Nation are not responsible for educating you on these topics. It is helpful to meet with a trusted partner who is familiar with the respective Nation to discuss what information you ought to research on your own, where you might find it, and how it relates to the research you intend to do.

Language

As a result of colonization, every Native language in Oklahoma is either endangered or sleeping. Language is a major cultural identifier. Loss of language equates to loss of culture, which has devastating consequences. For one, the disappearance of a Native language signifies the passing of a specific epistemology (way of knowing) and ontology (way of being), which then limits and greatly constrains our understanding of the world. Many people are completely oblivious to such loss – after all, you can’t mourn what you never knew.

**Language is a major cultural identifier. Loss of language equates to loss of culture, which has devastating consequences.**

The majority of Native languages in Oklahoma have a handful or two of remaining fluent speakers; some have none; some have hundreds. Most fluent speakers are elders, usually age 75 or older. Because of this scarcity of fluent speakers, most Indian Nations in Oklahoma and elsewhere have taken steps to preserve and revitalize their languages. In fact, the Federal Government (via the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) Language Program) invests around \$4-6 Million annually in Native language preservation, revitalization, and immersion programs.

The major language groups (represented by specific Indian nations in Oklahoma) include:

- Siouan (Quapaw, Osage, Kaw, Iowa, Ponca, Otoe-Missouria)
- Muscogean (Seminole Creek, Chickasaw, Muscogee Creek, Alabama & Quassarte, Choctaw)
- Penutian (Modoc)

- Iroquoian (Cherokee, Seneca, Wyandotte)
- Uto-Aztecan-Kiowa-Tanoan-Athabaskan (Comanche, Kiowa, Apache)
- Caddoan (Wichita, Caddo, Pawnee)
- Algonquian (Eastern Shawnee, Ottawa, Peoria, Miami, Shawnee, Delaware, Sac & Fox [Sauk], Potawatomi, Absentee Shawnee, Kickapoo, Cheyenne & Arapaho)
- Isolated languages include: Euchee (Yuchi), Tonkawa, and Natchez

Kinship Systems

Most of the Indian Nations in Oklahoma are unilineal – that is either matrilineal or patrilineal. In many Native communities, the extended family plays an integral role raising and teaching children. Children are frequently in the care of parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents, (older) cousins, family friends, and so on. In this way, family bonds create extremely close-knit communities, especially among the smaller Indian Nations in Oklahoma. In many cases, the staff of tribal business and governmental departments will be primarily composed of tribal members. Those Native students who leave the community to attend a college or university often do so with the expectation they will return and “give back” to the community.

Belief Systems

Every Indian nation in Oklahoma has its own belief systems, religion(s), and ceremonies. Not surprisingly, these systems vary greatly from one Indian Nation to the next and within each community. Some nations or groups hold monotheistic beliefs, while others are polytheistic. As a researcher, it can be valuable to know some general information about the belief systems of the community you’re working with. In some cases, an understanding of the precise implements or ceremonies involved in a particular practice is both unnecessary and, if brought up, can be off putting. This type of information has historically been gathered by non-Native researchers in a non-consensual process and is often closely guarded nowadays. What is generally more important than specifics is a general understanding of how value is allocated and any ways that this information might intersect with your work. Particular landforms that carry special significance, dates or time periods of importance, whether only certain members of a community are permitted to provide invocations, or if certain topics are off-limits for conversations are all useful context for working with a particular community.

For the Indian nations in Oklahoma, most of which were forcibly removed from their traditional homelands, their historical and spiritual connections to those homelands typically remains quite strong. Land (the landscape, ecosystem, waterways, biological life) factors significantly into religious practices, serving both as a place to experience spirituality but also, in many cases, the source of it. Sacred sites exist all over the Americas (both North and South). As a researcher interested in developing long-term relations with Indian nations, it is important that you are familiar with a specific Nation’s homeland and the generally significant features therein.



Impacts of Christian Religions

The long-term impact of Christian religions (Catholicism, Protestantism) on shaping contemporary Native belief systems cannot be understated. Some Tribes have incorporated bits and pieces of Christian beliefs into their own belief systems, others have completely eschewed any influence of non-Native beliefs, while some populations within an Indian Nation have turned away from their traditional beliefs and fully embraced all components of Christian beliefs. Those segments of the Tribal population that choose one of these three belief systems can be either quite small or quite large. It is important for you to embrace the task of learning as much as you can about the context of the specific Indian Nation(s) with which you seek a relationship.

For those Wishing to Research Ceremonies and Religion

If you are a non-Native researcher, if you are new to the field, and if your wish is to research and/or participate in ceremonies or other religious practices, you ought to consider doing something else. Research in and with Indigenous communities, particularly on religious topics, has evolved tremendously in recent years, largely toward a focus on research led by Indigenous researchers. Chances are that you are not the right person to do that research, if it should be done at all. If you attempt to go into research with an expressed interest to examine or take part in ceremonies, expect to experience outright rejection. Many ceremonies are off limits to non-Natives (and other Natives who are not members of that Nation). Native religion has been the subject of fascination, fetishization, and replication by Euro-Americans since the early colonial period, and many communities are sick of it. Don't become part of that pattern.

Creative Expression

All thirty-nine Indian nations in Oklahoma practice:

Music & Dance

Textile Arts (aka, regalia and beadwork)

Poetry (for multiple purposes and across multiple layers)

Art (painting, jewelry, and sculpture, contemporary and/or traditional a hybrid)

Storytelling (verbal or written; fiction or non-fiction, including history, culture, traditions)

Each Nation practices all of these activities as a means of self- and community-expression, serving to preserve and celebrate cultural identity and differences.



Chumash Basketry Trey, 1800's, from the Peabody Museum at Harvard University

On Art, Authenticity, and Cross-Pollination

What is Native art? For your purposes, it is art made by Native people. While this explanation may seem unnecessary, many contemporary Native artists whose styles or mediums deviate from traditional forms have been criticized for not being “authentic.” Much of this criticism comes from non-Native people, whose tastes drive much of the commercial market for Native art, though there are also pressures internally to stick to traditional forms and styles of Native art. Many tribal nations or regions have certain styles or forms that were, at one time, endemic to their communities. For example, bold, chromatic pottery is commonly made in the Pueblos, needle baskets by the Coushatta Tribes (as well as others), soapstone carvings in Inuit communities, and the ubiquitous rugs by Navajo artists. Over time, immense cross-pollination has occurred between tribal nations, as a result of trade, movement (whether forced or voluntary), and inter-marriage. Art styles, music (or particular songs), styles of particular dress, dances, and other forms of cultural expression have moved between communities and become adopted and adapted, or emerged as some new thing entirely. International exchange has been happening as long as there have been tribal nations on the continent, but colonization and forced removal has made the whole situation a lot more complicated.

Sometimes this exchange results in new innovations in art, music, or dance. Sometimes the exchanges can cause problems, as when songs used only during funerals in one community become used as social songs in another. Sometimes it results in a pan-tribal form of expression, such as the Native American Church or powwows. The millenia-old tension between the new and the traditional is one of the ways communities decide what defines who they are and how they are different from other nations.

As a researcher, it is useful to know what some of the commonly practiced styles of cultural expression are for the community you desire to work with. It is important to remember, however, that you're not entitled to an opinion about what is or is not “authentic,” whether the topic at hand is art, music, religion, or any other expression of Native identity.



## Political Order

Since the founding of the United States, Indian nations have been at the Federal government's mercy in many ways. Deception, disease, coercion, and the negative impacts of Manifest Destiny<sup>1</sup> have defined the political relationship between Tribal Nations and the United States (as well as Canada, Great Britain, France, and Spain).

Despite the U.S. government's numerous attempts to destroy Tribal Nations (and their cultures and ways of being), 573 Federally recognized Tribes (Tribal Nations, communities, or entities) maintain government-to-government relationships with the United States, with more being recognized regularly. They are sovereign nations within the borders of the U.S. Other Tribal Nations and Indigenous Peoples exist without recognition from the Federal government, either with or without recognition from the states within which their citizens reside (so-called "state-recognized" Tribes). For your purposes as a researcher, you must interact with any self-identified Tribal Nation you work

<sup>1</sup> Manifest Destiny is the 19th century doctrine that drove American imperialism. It prosed that the U.S., its people, and its institutions had special virtues, that it was their mission to "redeem" America, and that they were destined to do this work.



"Manifest Destiny (A.K.A. American Progress)" John Gast, 1872



Oklahoma Sunset, Photograph by Derek Rosendahl

with as a sovereign nation.

Each Nation has a long and established history of self-governance that pre-dates the Revolutionary War. Political systems of Tribal Nations vary widely. Whether governments were formal or informal, decision making was carried out by the community and its leaders – whether that community consisted of a few families or many bands. Often times, elders – either men or women, depending on the nation's power structure – provided problem-solving recommendations to those seeking counsel. More recently, the Dawes Act (aka, Indian Allotment Act), boarding school policies, and the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) of 1934 have dramatically impacted political structures. As a result of changes imposed on Tribal Nations through the IRA, numerous groups have chosen to establish joint council (governance) structures – one for "business" matters with those outside the Nation and one for "traditional" matters within the Nation.

## Traditions

Simply put, Native traditions are "ways of doing" and "ways of knowing." Every Indian Nation in Oklahoma has practices and beliefs that dictate various aspects of day-to-day living – from ceremonies to planting and other cyclical activities. Millennial-old epistemologies and ontologies shape long-held beliefs about systems of life and culture.

## Native Science

Native science exists. It is a thing. It is real. Native science is a combination of stories, observations, traditions, relationships, ceremonies, and cultural associations connected to all life associated with the land, air, and water. Native science is sometimes referred to under the heading "traditional knowledge," "indigenous knowledge," or "traditional ecological knowledge." You also may hear it

referred to as “empirical knowledge” or “empirically based science,” meaning science or systems of knowledge largely gained as the result of centuries of experimentation, observation, and translation. None of these terms fully encapsulates the layers of cultural and religious context that fold over the scientific knowledge comprising Native science. Spirituality, including the “aliveness” of the resources which Native sciences concern, factors heavily into a Native scientist’s understanding of those resources. Many non-Native researchers might be familiar with notions of “sacredness” from their experiences with Abrahamic faiths, but “sacredness” in a Native science context includes many additional layers of meaning and usefulness in addition to the abstract religious value of a landscape or resource. Plants, animals, landscapes, and other natural features are important parts of a Nation’s historical record. They serve as ongoing sites for ceremony and provide items used therein, and they provide the foundation upon which a language is built and used, among many other things. Native science, religion, and life ways are highly contextual, meaning that you can’t (and shouldn’t try) to divorce any of a community’s scientific information from its socio-cultural-spiritual origins.

**As a non-Native scholar, your willingness to embrace (or at least respect) the principles of Native science will determine your ability to build meaningful relationships and work successfully in Oklahoma Indian Country (and elsewhere).**

NATIVE SCIENCE	COMMON GROUND	WESTERN SCIENCE
holistic	unified universe	compartmentalized
emphasis on practical application	stable, but modifiable body of knowledge	emphasis on understanding how
combines physical and moral evidence and understanding	honesty, inquisitiveness, open-mindedness	focuses on physical evidence and understanding
trust for inherited wisdom	empirical observation of natural occurrences	Skepticism
local verification	verification through repetition	global verification
qualitative oral record	inference and prediction	quantitative written record
integrated with and applied to daily living and tradition		micro and macro theories

Based on the “Handbook for Culturally Responsive Science Curriculum”, by Sidney Stevens

There’s not any good catch-all term for describing the complex interactions that underpin Native science. Describing traditional knowledge as “science” can alienate those who view their systems of knowledge and spirituality from a non-scientific perspective; likewise, those who view their knowledge as scientifically valid (which it is) may be offended by terms like “traditional knowledge.” It’s complicated and requires a lot of sensitivity to navigate this nexus effectively. Let this information serve as a basic stepping stone towards a more comprehensive understanding, which may be provided by other texts or a friend or colleague in the particular Nation.

As a non-Native researcher, you should understand how your project may or may not intersect with Native science, and take care to avoid undermining the validity of Native science or “testing” traditional knowledges. Significant Native scholars who examine issues related to Native science are referenced in Appendix C.

### 1.2 Understanding Tribal Sovereignty in Context

Simply put, sovereignty, in the context of American Indian nations, is a central premise for existence. Tribal sovereignty centers on the rights to:

- Govern one’s nation
- Develop economic enterprises
- Define tribal citizenship
- Manage property
- Administer any other function required of a sovereign government

Tribal sovereignty has been retained, not granted, through treaties and treaty obligations. The U.S. government gave nothing to Tribal Nations; rather, Nations retained their sovereign land, rights, and status when they signed treaties.

Tribal sovereignty, from the perspective of the Federal Government, has always been held in check by a variety of court decisions and pieces of legislation, dating back to the Commerce Clause of the Constitution. The Marshall Trilogy is among the earliest of decisions affecting tribal sovereignty. These three U.S. Supreme Court cases lay out the central, persistent tension of Tribal sovereignty — that, from the Federal Government’s perspective, these Nations behave like foreign nations in some ways and like domestic nation-states in others. In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), the Court held that Tribes’ “relation to the United States resembles that of a ward to its guardian.” Yet in *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832), the Court held that the State of Georgia had no jurisdiction on Indian Land, and that the Federal Government was the sole authority to interface with Indian Nations. Why? “The Indian nations had always been considered as distinct, independent political communities, retaining their original natural rights, as the undisputed possessors of the soil, from time immemorial.” These are the two ends of the continuum upon which Tribal sovereignty exists in the present legal sense.



One reductive way of describing this relationship would be that Tribes existed as sovereign foreign nations and exchanged lands or certain authorities in order to gain access to resources provided by the Federal Government, thus becoming “domestic” nations, that receive key services from and have important arrangement with the United States. Tribes’ status as “dependent,” however, is largely due to the fact that the Federal Government has, on countless occasions, failed to provide the rights and services agreed to in treaties or deliberately violated treaty conditions.

An example of this latter type of failure was the long-standing conflict over fishing rights in the Pacific Northwest, culminating in the “Boldt Decision” of 1975. Tribes in Western Washington signed treaties in 1854 and 1855 that guaranteed the right to fish “in common with Citizens of the Territory” at “usual and accustomed grounds and stations.” But over the next century, Tribal fishermen were increasingly displaced by non-Native fishermen, and eventually were excluded from fishing in certain areas and certain times by State regulatory agencies. Eventually, after decades of advocacy, a judge ruled that the phrase “in common with” meant that Tribes in Western Washington had a 50% stake in the harvest and management of the fisheries in the treaty areas. Had these rights been upheld from the start, Tribes would have been able to sustain commercial and subsistence fishing practices, as well as substantively participate in the management of the fisheries. As is, the fisheries in Western Washington were heavily stressed at the time of the decision, leading to criticism that the decision would lead to the collapse of the industry in the area. While that might be true, the Tribes in Western Washington were not to blame for the resulting problems, rather the Federal and State governments did not respect the legal rights of these Tribal Nations to participate in management and harvest from the beginning, as they were promised. Growth of the industry should have been constrained to allow room for treaty fishermen from the beginning. It was not, and now its size may be unsustainable.<sup>1</sup>

Similar failures in administration of treaty and trust services abound, including where the Federal Government has provided services for policing, health, roads, education, royalties management,<sup>2</sup> and more. The continued incompetence of the Federal Government to acceptably provide these services led to the Self-Determination Act of 1975, which permitted Tribes to take over the administration of these services and receive the government’s costs of implementation directly.

All this is to say that while it may be clinically accurate to describe tribal nations as “Domestic Dependent Nations,” such a description ignores the fact that these Nations have been hamstrung by a series of failures on the part of the Federal Government to keep its promises. As more Tribal Nations are able to internalize administration of services and realize more complete expression of their treaty rights and sovereign powers, this description becomes increasingly obsolete.

<sup>1</sup> In the years since, the Northwest Indian Fisheries Commission and other tribal organizations have stepped up to assist with the management of the fisheries and habitats, and the condition of the fisheries has improved somewhat.

<sup>2</sup> In 2009, the Department of the Interior settled a class-action lawsuit for the mismanagement of Indian trust funds for \$3.4 billion. The defendants alleged that the government’s exposure was as high as \$176 billion.

### 1.3 History of Research in Indian Country

**“From the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism. The word itself, ‘research,’ is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary.”**

– Linda Tuhiwai Smith<sup>1</sup> (Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou iwi)

It is the non-Native researcher’s ethical responsibility, and in their best interests, to educate themselves on the perception of and impact that research has had on Native communities historically. Here’s a condensed version: It’s bad. What that means for you as a researcher is that you and your work will be perceived negatively by default. You must determine that your work is necessary and whether you are the right person to do it. You also must decide if it is necessary; if so, you must design it in such a way that it bucks the centuries-long trend of abusive research.

Because of this history of abuse, it is fundamentally more difficult to do research in Indian country than elsewhere, and it takes more effort to do it well. That being said, the level of sensitivity and attention that it takes to do good research in Indian Country can motivate researchers to design really good projects and become much better connected with those who use the information being generated. Become invested in a good process, and be aware of how the traditional research process can be (is) extractive or exploitative.

#### The Academy as a Colonial Institution

Historical trauma is defined as “trauma that reverberates across generations as a result of genocide, loss of culture, forced removals, boarding school experiences, and more.”<sup>2</sup> Historical trauma manifests itself through economic, social, and behavioral struggles that move from one generation to the next. High rates of poverty, suicide, addiction, and other health-related issues common in many Native communities can be linked to historical trauma. Researchers from all backgrounds have contributed to this historical trauma, whether deliberately or through negligence. Many of these past infractions are easily understood to be violations of ethical research practices (e.g., forced sterilization of Native women), but history illustrates the fact that Euro-American academic institutions often considered damaging research practices to be acceptable by the standards of the time.

<sup>1</sup> Decolonization Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples (2012) by Linda Tuhiwai, Zed Books, 2nd Edition, 240pp.

<sup>2</sup> Brave Heart MYH, DeBruyn LM. The American Indian Holocaust: Healing historical unresolved grief. American Indian Research. 1998;8(2):56-78



Two case studies demonstrate this history. By providing these case studies, we’re hoping to prompt you to interrogate your own methods and intentions. While these examples may be the most egregious violations of ethical practices, consider how “common practices” in non-Native research projects today may be damaging if replicated in work with Native peoples. How will Native researchers of the future look upon your process and products?

**Barrow, Alaska, 1980**

“The Inupiat Eskimos of Alaska’s North Slope, whose culture has been overwhelmed by energy development activities, are ‘practically committing suicide’ by mass alcoholism... researchers said here yesterday. The alcoholism rate is 72 percent among the 2,000 Eskimo men and women in the village of Barrow, where violence is becoming the most frequent cause of death as a result of ‘the explosive and self destructive abuse of alcohol,’ the researchers said. ‘Offshore oil development is expected to peak in 2010 or 2015’ ... one of the researchers, said at a news conference. ‘We don’t see the Eskimos surviving till then. This is not a collection of individual alcoholics, but a society which is alcoholic, and therefore facing extinction.’”<sup>3</sup>

This excerpt is from an article written by the New York Times that was based on a study called “The Inupiat: Economics and alcohol on the Alaskan North Slope: a final report on alcohol use in Barrow.” The study was commissioned by Barrow’s (now officially named Utqiagvik) Department of Public Safety<sup>4</sup> for the purposes of improving the City’s response to the growing problem posed by alcoholism in the community.<sup>5</sup> The researchers shared the results of their study with the public and with the city simultaneously, leading the information to be picked up by the New York Times and other media outlets. The study drew criticism from the Inupiat community for several reasons, including a lack of proper consent procedures, the fact that its researchers chose to share the study with the public before the Utqiagvik community had the chance to review it, and the sensationalized, stigmatizing portrait painted by the researchers. The article discussed the problems caused by alcohol consumption and made dire predictions based upon observation of its impacts on the community, while largely ignoring potential interventions to prevent associated deaths (which was the entire reason the researchers were brought in). Even with this major flaw, the researchers still could have prevented the lasting damage of their work if they had given the community time to review it and had discussed their concerns in advance, rather than sharing it immediately with news organizations. Ultimately, the article led to the Standard & Poor’s bond rating for Inupiat villages to drop, stifling economic growth and infrastructure projects,<sup>6</sup> and leaving Utqiagvik with more problems than the community started with, as well as a distaste for researchers.

3 “Alcohol Plagues Eskimos” by Dava Sobel. Article in the New York Times January 22, 1980  
4 Hodge, Felicia (2012): No Meaningful Apology for American Indian Unethical Research Abuses. Ethics & Behavior 22.  
5 Noe et al., 2006: “In Their Own Voices: American Indian Decisions to Participate in Health Research.” SAGE Publications Inc. 78-92.  
6 <sup>24</sup> Proctor, J.D. and D. M. Smith, 1999: Geography and Ethics: Journeys in a Moral Terrain. Psychology Press, 303pp.

**Havasupai, Arizona, 1990**

**“All I know is I feel like we turned students into doctors, turned students into professors. All this education we got for so many people, I just don’t see what we got out of all this.”**

– Rex Tilousi, Havasupai Nation Chairman

Most researchers are likely familiar with Institutional Review Board (IRB), which reviews the methods for proposed research projects to ensure that they are being conducted ethically. IRBs lay the groundwork for ethical research, but they are insufficient unless accompanied by a researcher who is committed to an ethical and inclusive process. The University of Arizona (ASU) had an IRB in place when it commenced work on a Type-2 diabetes study with the Havasupai Nation of Arizona in 1989. During the study, university researchers collected about 400 blood samples from Tribal members in order to attempt to find links between Type-2 diabetes and the Tribal members’ genes. While the blood was in ASU’s possession, it was used for unrelated studies, including those on schizophrenia, migration, and inbreeding. The Nation only found out about these studies when a participant in the project attended a lecture at ASU in 2003. The Nation later sued the university.

The informed consent documents included language stating that the blood would be used for research on “behavioral and medical disorders”. Although the additional topics ultimately studied fell under that heading, the Nation would never have given their approval due to the negative cultural significance and associated stigma of the additional research topics. An argument was made that, at least in this respect, ASU was operating within the boundaries of its IRB and associated agreements with the Tribe.<sup>7</sup> The Tribe was so harmed by the researchers’ behaviors despite this, however, suggesting that IRBs and the other institutional boundaries placed on researchers are insufficient assurances of appropriate researcher behavior. This statement isn’t to say that a university or a Tribal IRB is worthless, but that it is only the first step.

**“It was wrong of them to use my blood for whatever they used it for without my permission. We were just trying to get help for our diabetes, nothing else. How can we trust anyone anymore?”**

– Roland Manakaja<sup>8</sup>, Havasupai tribal member

7 This is, of course, a highly abbreviated account of the study and the charges levied against it, which include risking the identity of individuals in the study (naming the Havasupai Tribe, when 400 of the roughly 600 tribal members participated), losing or misplacing blood samples when the agreement stated that all samples would be returned to the Tribe, and violating HIPAA regulations. Many of these objections are grounded in the fact that the ASU researchers actually did violate the IRB protocols, but the point being made here is that it is possible to conduct research that has negative impacts to Tribal partners without violating IRB protocols.  
8 “Indian Givers” by Paul Rubin. Article in the Phoenix New Times on May 27, 2004.

These examples are certainly egregious violations by researchers, but there are countless examples of both egregious and routine misconduct that continues today. There's even a name for this type of research abuse: "helicopter researchers." Helicopter researchers drop in, make promises, do their work, and are never heard from again. This kind of research isn't harmless. It draws attention and resources away from vital functions that Tribal staff and citizens are performing. It can lead to repetitive research on the same topics, leading the community to feel resentful and over-researched. If a Nation experiences repetitive



Map of New Mexico by General Juan Miguel Menchero Image from the "Handbook of North American Indians" by William C. Sturtevant

negative impacts from research on the same topic, they may prohibit research on that topic altogether, which could have its own negative consequences. Researchers who leave communities with negative perceptions make it incrementally more difficult for any researcher who attempts to work with the same community, and severe violations certainly will eliminate the possibility of any research with the host institution.

**Decolonize Your Perspective, Decolonize Your Research**  
"At a common sense level research was talked about both in terms of its absolute worthlessness to us, the indigenous world, and its absolute usefulness to those who wielded it as an instrument. It told us things already known, suggested things that would not work, and made careers for people who already had jobs."  
– Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou iwi)

This history hopefully will provide some perspective on why, as a researcher, you must demand an elevated level of care and diligence in your work. Most institutions have not designed their grant-vetting or IRB processes to respond to the precise needs of tribal research projects, and therefore these structures should not be expected to solely stop research abuses. To be clear, IRBs are really important; while they are often brushed aside or ridiculed as "bureaucratic red-tape," they prompt researchers to answer important questions about their work. But they alone are not enough.

In an effort to protect themselves from research abuses, increasingly, tribes, tribal colleges, and intertribal organizations have their own IRBs (e.g., Cherokee, Chickasaw, and Choctaw Nations; see Appendix D). Some of these tribal IRBs take a very long time to process and some significant effort on the researcher's part to complete. They should be viewed as a crucial part of the trust-building process and

not as redundant or burdensome. As discussed, past history demonstrates that tribes need their own measures to protect their interests. A researcher who is committed to an effective working relationship should be supportive of whatever measures the Tribe deems necessary, and they also should be committed to instituting additional practices on their end to ensure that they maintain an ethical and effective research protocol.

As you'll learn in the rest of this document, working with tribes demands a different perspective from other forms of research. In a "publish or perish" environment, some researchers may feel the need to make sure their research happens within a tight timeline and by any means necessary. This approach unfortunately has compelled many researchers in the past to make ethical compromises that have harmed tribes or damaged relationships. It's important that, if you are interested in working with tribes, you structure your project and internal/personal disposition in such a way as to prioritize the safety and sovereignty of your tribal partners and their information. Often times this will mean dramatically restructuring the way your research will take place, changing the topic itself, or even walking away if it becomes clear that your work has the potential to do more harm than good.

**One of the Good Ones**

I worked with a researcher who was conducting a series of video interviews requested by tribal members. She had submitted an IRB protocol to the university where she worked, but she was told she didn't need one because the results of her research were "not generalizable." Neither the tribe nor the tribal college on the reservation had an IRB process, so she instead arranged to present her completed IRB protocol materials to the tribal college's president. She also would share her IRB materials and protocols with all of the project's participants and anyone else interested in seeing them. She prompted discussions on the role of IRBs and methods that the participants could use with other researchers to ensure they conducted ethical research. Ultimately, she was invited to sit in on discussions during the development of the tribal college's own IRB process.

As a researcher, it is useful to know what some of the commonly practiced styles of cultural expression are for the community you desire to work with. It is important to remember, however, that you're not entitled to an opinion about what is or is not "authentic," whether the topic at hand is art, music, religion, or any other expression of Native identity.  
-Atty



It’s important to realize that your work exists within a largely negative historical context. You will, most likely, be followed by other researchers, some of whom will be bad actors. Tribal Nations are under no obligation to work with you, and in the long term, it’s in the Tribes’ best interests to minimize the risks they take by allowing in outside researchers. This judgment is increasingly occurring, as more Tribal citizens become researchers themselves.

In light of past injustices and changing paradigms, it is important now, more than ever, to ask critical questions about whether you are approaching your work with the right perspective and intentions — whether you are the right person to do research with the Tribe.

**Questions I often ask myself**

- Does this work need to be done?
- Am I the right person to be doing this work?
- Can it get done without me? Is there a Native person whose work I can support rather than doing it myself?
- If I am going to do this work, are there Native people who can serve in a position of authority in this project?
- Who is the work primarily serving?
- How can the work build capacity for the Tribal Nation?
- Is there support from the community for the project?
- Have enough people heard about the project to solicit any opposition that might be out there?
- If there are differing opinions about a project, are we risking sowing division in the community by continuing?
- Am I speaking with the right people? Am I speaking with all the right people?
- Do we have an effective system for ensuring that feedback gets back to us?
- Am I checking in regularly enough that people feel like there’s momentum and their opinions are being reflected in how we are doing the work?
- How am I minimizing my contact with and collection of sensitive information?
- How and to whom (in the community) are we going to disseminate this information once we’re done? How do we ensure that absolutely everyone in the community who wants access to this information (and should have it) can receive it?
- Why am I talking?
- Do I need to be talking? (Usually, the answer is no.)
- Atty

**Operating Principle 2: Principles**

Reciprocal relationships are of paramount importance for ethical research in Indian Country. They are the foundation of ethical methods and protocols, they guide research inquiries, and they lay the foundation for future collaborations.

As discussed in OP1, the negative history of research in Indian Country is characterized by researchers using relationships as a conduit to extract people’s trust, time, and data and to introduce stigmas, destructive information, and judgments from Euro-American institutions. It’s important to acknowledge from the start that functional research relationships with tribal partners are not transactional. As researchers, the purpose of these relationships should not be viewed as ensuring your access to information in exchange for time or certain resources. A better (but still reductive) means of thinking about good research relationships is that they are established on the basis of a mutual interest in one another’s well being.<sup>1</sup> Well-built relationships with the right people will help guide your research both practically and ethically: Researchers who approach their relationships from a perspective of mutuality tend to fall quite naturally into effective and ethical practices.

As is true in other areas of business, research, and daily life, research in tribal communities is highly dependent on who you know and what they know about you. Word travels fast. If your initial contacts discern your motivations to be self-interested or exploitative, it’s unlikely your research will get any traction. Likewise, if you build good relationships but then transgress after your research is completed (as in the Havasupai example), it’s unlikely that you or people from your institution will be able to do research with that community or other Tribal Nations in the region (or even nationwide).

For these reasons, getting relationships right from the start is essential for effective partnership. Of the many factors contributing to an effective research relationship, time, receptivity, authenticity, and humor are the factors that we determined were worthy of highlighting. OP2 consists of four sections, each focused on one of these elements:

- 2.1 Building Relationships Takes Time**
- 2.2 Listening**
- 2.3 Presenting Yourself Genuinely**
- 2.4 Maintaining a Sense of Humor**

<sup>1</sup> Note: This statement is truer for relationships with individuals than with a tribal government or department. A presentation to a tribal council, for example, would be an occasion to discuss in more straightforward terms of benefit to each individual party.



## 2.1 Building Relationships Takes Time

Developing a working relationship with individual tribal members and with tribal organizations takes time, patience, and perseverance — much more than one might initially expect. There are myriad reasons for this, including, of course, the sordid history of researchers in Indian Country. You'll spend some of your time demonstrating that you can be trusted and that you are coming into the project with the right intentions. Some of that time is to gradually expand your network and meet the right people. Much of the time will be spent traversing time-consuming but very important webs of approvals, both formal and informal.

Before you begin to attempt to do research, consider whether you can spare the time to build the relationships you'll need for the project, particularly if there isn't anyone on your team or at your institution who has existing relationships with the community in question. A lot of grants, in particular, have inflexible timelines that tend to be short and often inadequate both to build the necessary relationships and do the research in question. One year, for example, is almost never enough.

There isn't much that you can do to expedite some parts of this process. Liaisons or other researchers with pre-existing relationships can help by making sure you get in contact with the right people and, if they have a good relationship with the tribe in question, their introduction will impart credibility that can make the trust-building process a bit smoother. But be aware that those who put you in contact are putting their relationships and reputations on the line and trusting that you will build on the relationship and follow through.

Being familiar with the specific Nation's historical and cultural context can also smooth this process. Knowledge about the community you're working with is essential for a number of reasons, but for the purposes of building relationships, the willingness to spend the time to learn this information without any guarantee it will pay off in a research context can lay the foundation for mutuality. Additionally, the information will help you shape your research. Already having information about the community, its needs, and its context will allow you to be a better listener and a better collaborator.

### On Flexibility

How willing are you to deviate from your original research intentions? All projects evolve over time, and it's hard to predict how your research might be leveraged for the benefit of your tribal collaborators before those discussions begin. Are you willing to give up your original research goals if it becomes clear your collaborators prefer a different line of inquiry? Is your funding agency

**Your project and your own personal goals must be completely secondary to the creation of friendship and the goal of helping out the tribal community.**

flexible? Are your needs highly specific or relatively flexible? Is the project time-locked, or can it lengthen and adapt as it progresses? Do you have the time and willingness to work on another research project more suited to tribal needs in addition to the one you have planned already? It's perfectly acceptable to put boundaries on your willingness to contribute to other projects or serve in other roles in your tribal work, but many effective non-Native collaborators will take on roles, projects, or other work that falls outside the scope of their original intentions. It's all part of the reciprocity of effective research relationships. Commitment to the process and its inherent mutuality, rather than a particular research outcome, can lead researchers to identify roles they can play that can maximize their positive impact on the community.

## 2.2 Listening

Listening is important in whatever research context one might find oneself, but the practice of thoughtful listening carries a particular weight when working with Tribal Nations.

Listening has a heightened importance in the context of research relationships for a couple of reasons. The first reason results from the previously discussed history of abuse and neglect. Non-Native people, from researchers to politicians, have conducted "listening sessions" and other forms of consultation for decades without following them up with meaningful response. At a basic level, demonstrate that you actually are listening by taking action. Incorporating conversations and feedback into your research structure, or changing scope and focus to actually address community concerns, can distinguish you from the myriad of researchers who are not so receptive. The second reason results from the centrality of

**Many times someone will finish speaking, wait for a few beats, and then continue. Get familiar with the new cadence, and when in doubt, just wait.**

active and thoughtful listening within the greater context of many tribal cultures. In order to really listen effectively, researchers must understand that behaviors associated with speaking and listening will present themselves differently than they might be used to, and they should be prepared to make room for different styles of communication in their research and research design. Receptivity to these different kinds of input form the foundation for effective collaboration and research partnerships.

The differences in communication styles between non-Native researchers and their Native collaborators can contribute to research breakdowns and lead your collaborators to believe that you are not actually listening unless you make an effort to actively address potential pitfalls. First, it takes a while for people to get comfortable being candid with you, and the community as a whole will take a while to build trust with you. You can't expect to have the conversations you would like to have on your first few visits: This fact is the most common reason for the failure of one-off "listening sessions" and their ilk.

Second, you may not receive the kind of answers to questions that you may be used to. Sometimes you'll get responses in the form of a story, or you might be taken to an area or have something shown to you that relates in some way to the question at hand. Partners or participants may direct you to meet with someone else on the topic instead if they determine personally that they either are not the best person to speak about the topic or they do not completely trust you yet. They may not tell you why. It's up to you to connect the dots between what you asked for and what you're given. In these cases, your background research often becomes a key resource in figuring out what people are trying to get you to understand.

On an interpersonal level, pay attention to the cadence and tone of the conversations around you. Oftentimes Native people will not interrupt or offer verbal encouragement ("uh-huh," "yeah") while you are speaking. If you are used to interruptions or encouragement, it may take some getting used to; the frequent silences between individuals speaking can initially feel sort of solemn or even confrontational. Don't try to fill them, and don't interrupt others, particularly elders. Many times someone will finish speaking, wait for a few beats, and then continue. Get familiar with the new cadence, and when in doubt, just wait. Likewise, develop patience for discussions veering into new, different territory. Sometimes the enthusiasm that researchers have for their work dampens their ability really listen or prevents them from pursuing lines of inquiry and responses that lead seemingly away from their central research questions. It's important to remember in those moments that: 1) often, those lines of inquiry lead right back to the question being asked, if the researcher has enough patience to follow them, 2) whether or not you keep a tight hand on the wheel of your discussions and conversations reflects on your intentions and character, and 3) when viewed from a holistic perspective, nothing is off-topic. Sometimes just by demonstrating that you are willing to change your research and questions to better fit your partner's needs, through active, receptive listening that considers the breadth of the tribe's needs and history, you end up not needing to change it much at all.

- 1. They handed it off to someone else who failed/forgot to follow up
- 2. They forgot to respond because they got too busy dealing with other (local/political/ personal) issues
- 3. Indian nations in Oklahoma continue to live with the ramifications of colonization and attempted cultural assimilation every day
- 4. Some people will not like you because you are white, or non-Native – deal with it (Peppler, 2010; Fuller, 2002; Basso, 1996)

## 2.3 Presenting Yourself Genuinely

As with so many other facets of working in Indian Country, honesty and authenticity have an elevated importance for non-Native researchers because of the historically duplicitous tendencies of non-Native people interacting with Tribal Nations. It is important to note that radical honesty and openness about yourself and your intentions does not mean that you should share all the information you receive over the course of your project with anyone who asks.

Being "genuine" in the context of working in Indian Country is a matter of knowing what to say, how and when to say it, and what not to say. Early on in your relationships, it is important to be completely transparent about who you are, what you are doing, your methods, the people you've been communicating with, and what they have been telling you. During this initial phase of your relationships, you are being constantly vetted and evaluated. If you are not completely honest in these conversations, people will pick up on it.

As people begin to share information with you, however, it's critical that you protect this information with the same process that it took to get to you. It's safe to assume, though not always true, that any information that someone shares with you is not common knowledge. Ask, if given the opportunity. Even when speaking with other tribal members, behave cautiously with any information you receive. Unless you are extremely familiar with the community, it is very difficult to know whether something is appropriate to share. Lots of information falls into this category. In many communities, whether or not someone is a spiritual or cultural leader can be considered sensitive information. Different clan or family affiliations can mean that, even within the same tribe or reservation, people often don't know and shouldn't know that information. When and where

### Navigating Social Networks

Human relationships are complicated. Sometimes it behooves you to be associated with someone, and other times it's problematic. If your project requires you to work with a wide cross-section of people, be nimble with how you navigate social networks. Our first contact for one project that I worked on was a polarizing figure. Through him, we were introduced to a ton of people, but the project was dependent on having representatives of both sides of a certain social issue. We basically had to start our outreach from scratch to get people to respond from the "other side," and the first couple people we met declined to talk because they heard that we had communicated with our initial contact first. Eventually, we learned that in order to get a fair sampling (as has been requested by our tribal collaborators), we needed to frame our project as actively seeking other people's opinions. "We're talking to everybody. Mr./Ms. X was just the first person we met."

– Atty



certain religious events are happening can be sensitive for the same reasons. The kinds of projects certain departments are working on, a business someone is starting, who is in a relationship with whom, etc. may be sensitive. In general, if someone waited to share something with you, consider it “classified” and refrain from talking about it with other people unless you are certain that the person you are talking to knows about it already. All of this may seem complicated, but really it just boils down to the same basic principles that undergird all of what has been discussed so far. Pay attention. Be sensitive. Listen more than you talk.

Additional Principles To Guide You

1. Keep your promises.

This statement hopefully goes without saying. If you’re prioritizing relationships, you’re keeping your promises, or your relationships will be short-lived. Do the things you say you will do, and do them quickly. Don’t overcommit or over promise. Early on, people will likely push you a bit to see if you’ll actually do the things you’ll say. If you’re asking for their trust, earn it.

2. Own your discomfort.

I spent a huge percentage of my life in spaces dominated by people who look and act like me (a white man). At first, it was really uncomfortable to be in spaces that didn’t resemble that model. It’s easy in those situations to feel defensive, to try to assert oneself in a way that makes the space feel like yours, or to force others to meet you in your spaces. Own the discomfort. Be the one to adapt. At least early on, the fact that you are uncomfortable is usually a good sign. Lean into it. Feel weird because there are long pauses in your conversation? Let them hang. Rather meet at your office than theirs? Make the commute. Unsure how to behave while someone is providing an invocation? Ask someone you trust politely about it. Dislike having conversations over the phone (a classic millennial problem)? Do it anyway. Being a good research partner is being willing to sustain the discomfort, to make the accommodations so that others don’t have to. Learn to be in spaces without trying to make them feel like your own. Solicit criticism. Be anxious. Be accommodating.

3. Protect their Information.

Not all information should be shared. It’s always your job to chose what information to share. Sometimes you’ll be told directly that something is sensitive, sometimes you’ll have to infer. If you are unsure, err on the side of caution. The mishandling of sensitive information is one of the biggest reasons that Native people and institutions are mistrustful of non-Native institutions and researchers.

4. Bend your Bureaucracy.

Too often researchers or governmental employees don’t follow through on commitments because of bureaucratic impediments or policy changes. Sometimes their genuine attempts are stymied. Other times they hide behind the bureaucracy to offload projects they don’t want to do. Your job is to prevent your bureaucracy from ever negatively impacting your tribal research partners. You may have to bend the rules a little bit. I have spent nights camping near a conference I was attending so that one of my research partners could use my per-diem to attend themselves (My university told me that they wouldn’t cover them, despite the fact that it was crucial for the project). I’ve heard of federal employees using creative means to purchase animals that were important for cultural protocols around certain projects. Making your university do what you need them to in order to keep your promises can be difficult, time consuming, or stressful, but its a key part of owning your discomfort. Make the effort.  
– Atty

2.4 Maintaining a Sense of Humor

BE Genuine  
Authentic  
Personal  
Passionate  
Open  
Social  
An Educator  
A Solution Seeker  
A Promise Keeper

Don’t take yourself too seriously. Despite stereotypical representations in popular culture, Native people often have a wicked sense of humor, and humor plays a major role in Indigenous cultures and worldviews. That’s not to say that every Native person is a comedian, but if you go into work in Indian Country expecting people to be mostly stern and stoic, you’ll most likely be surprised. It’ll behoove you as a researcher to have a bit of irreverence about yourself and your position. If you don’t expect people to be impressed or intimidated by your fancy degree, and you’re willing to laugh at yourself as you or others make jokes at your expense, you’ll find people will be much more receptive to you.

When I moved to Pawnee in 2002, I did so not only to start working for the Pawnee Nation, but in large part, because my love interest was in Pawnee. She became my lovely and beautiful wife. She happens to have five uncles, and when I moved to Pawnee, all o them in their own time and their own way, were able to meet with me one-on-one. Each questioned me very diligently about my intent with their niece, why I was in Pawnee, and whether my intentions were good and positive and honest. I felt like I was as genuine as I could be, and of course, I was greatly intimidated.

Then, at one of our first family gatherings when we came in the door, my wife’s grandmother called me “grandson.” I had met with a couple of the uncles, some of them I hadn’t, but everybody was like ‘oh!’ Grandmother saw me as her grandson, so everybody had to acknowledge that — it couldn’t be ignored. Not long after that, I met with the other uncles too. Within a few months, we would have family gatherings or I would see them and they would insist on teasing me. They would call me ‘white man’ in Pawnee, which is sort of ribbing, but then they would also make fun of my socks. If I was wearing a white T-shirt, they said that they were being blinded and hurting their eyes. Things like that would happen constantly.

I was caught off guard by it at first, but it wasn’t long until I realized what was happening. My wife and her mom told me “if they’re teasing you, then that means that you’re liked and they trust you.” You’re going to get teased for a long time and get teased hard because that’s Pawnee way. That’s the Indian way of folks saying that they appreciate you, care about you, and want to keep you in line, keep you humble.

Native humor can be cyclical in a strange way and can take reference from any number of different agents that people might be talking about; it becomes almost like insider joking. You can read Vine Deloria’s and Kenneth Lincoln’s works, both of whom are important to understanding certain notions of Native humor and how teasing happens in very honest and genuine ways. Situations like those made me realize that the images that we see growing up (e.g., representations of Natives in Hollywood Westerns) were not accurate. Natives don’t tend to be stoic; they tend to be fun-loving and robust in their teasing, laughter, and engagement in so many things. Humor is a survival mechanism in some ways. A lot of the Pawnee folks who I know that have experienced tremendous devastation still have their senses of humor because it’s a way to survive personal devastation or the historical trauma that the Tribe experienced in the 19th century. In that way, Indian humor moves way beyond anything we have seen with Hollywood depictions or mascots — you see real, living individuals who are absolutely dynamic and hilarious.  
– Todd

## Operating Principle 3: Collaboration

Collaborative methods serve as the groundwork upon which effective research relationships are built. Collaborative relationships galvanize dynamic and sustainable projects, while relationships that aren't collaborative at their core will quickly stagnate or fizzle out. OP3 consists of three sections:

### 3.1 Collaborating with Tribal Colleges

### 3.2 Collaborative Approaches

### 3.2 Framing Your Research Project

Each section addresses distinct methods that you can use in your research to invite collaboration, ensure that your partners' ideas are being respected and represented, and sustain long-term collaborative relationships. Section 3.1 will address collaborations with Tribal colleges. Section 3.2 will address behaviors and processes you can use to build a research framework that values and actively elicits input from your partners, as well as methods which you can use to create and facilitate dialogues and address unexpected challenges collaboratively. Section 3.3 will address how you can go about framing and describing your research project and objectives to potential partners in a way that does not alienate their vision and provides an invitation to collaborate.

### 3.1 Collaborating with Tribal Colleges

Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) are higher education entities, typically chartered by specific Indian Nations, and which have at the center of their mission the task of preserving specific cultural and traditional components. In addition, they seek to serve their tribes by offering curricula that meet the Nation's education/workforce needs.

In Oklahoma, there are currently two active tribal colleges that::

- Acknowledge a shared interest regarding a specific activity, purpose, goal, objective, or project.
- Discuss(respectfully, via mutual dialogue) various perspectives about a given point or issue.
- Value conflicts as a means for providing clarification, establishing useful discussion, and developing a mutual understanding.
- Create parallel visions and trust through shared acknowledgement of purposes.
- Reach agreed-upon endpoints through discussion.

Collaboration cannot be rushed, done overnight, or achieved only by email or phone calls. To build trustworthy and meaningful relationships, you should expect to devote at least a year to developing a collaborative research relationship. It may take longer, it may be shorter – it depends on the people and Tribal nation with whom you are working.



Logos for the College of the Muscogee Nation and Pawnee Nation College

### 3.2 Collaborative Approaches

Collaborative approaches include behaviors, activities, and processes that allow researchers and teams to engage in culturally perceptive problem identification and solution seeking:

- Distinct behaviors conducive for collaboration often involve beginning with a positive mindset, employing an appropriate tone, which typically **fosters trust**. (An appropriate tone is one that is even-keeled and motivated by a sense of affirmation and inclusion.)
- Activities conducive to positive collaborative research approaches encompass communicating clearly and (often) repetitively and providing administrative support (such as following up quickly and keeping various parties informed and updated).
- Different processes involved in establishing collaborative environments include providing value for each of the participants, creating mutual dialogue so that multiple perspectives might become convergent, and seeking input from all who have invested of their time and effort.<sup>1</sup>

When conducting research with Tribal nations, a collaborative approach can provide a positive framework for short- and long-term interactions.

**For the non-Native researcher, it is critical to allow and encourage Native collaborators in positions of authority during every phase of the project.**



Process of Creating Dialogues

The activity of creating a mutual dialogue is often difficult for non-Native researchers, especially since we are often trained to hold forth or otherwise pontificate about areas of subject expertise. Letting others into the conversation can be difficult. However, your research goal of creating productive and meaningful long-term research relationships depends on your ability to allow others to articulate their ideas and concerns. It is incumbent upon you to create dialogues with tribal partners. Doing so will allow you to:

- Listen, and thereby gain an understanding of your potential partner’s needs, as they relate to the project;
- Build trust through listening and sharing ideas and information; and
- Understand more fully both the individuals with whom you are working and the professional context in which you find yourself, among other things.

“Creating dialogues,” in the context of tribal research, is different than simply putting oneself into contact with the right individuals, as it might be in non-Native research contexts. Because of your academic position and the historical baggage that it brings, you can’t simply begin a conversation on level ground. Rather, you have to create a space where your partners feel (rightly) comfortable expressing their needs, concerns, ideas, and information. You can create such an atmosphere through numerous approaches, one of which might be, for instance, to seek input by asking project-specific questions.

Creating Space, Creating Dialogues

If you don’t appropriately create a space for conversations to occur at meetings with Tribal professionals, you won’t receive meaningful participation. Our recommendations include a number of strategies allowing for open dialog, avoiding common mistakes, and employing local resources to provide assistance. First, when meeting with Tribal professionals, it is important to reiterate the basic goals of the meeting and seek input from others — as quickly as you can. In addition, to facilitate the smooth running of the meeting, you might consider sending a “Talking Points” agenda to all the participants a week prior. This process takes away elements of surprise and allows participants to be interactive in the agenda-making process and to control aspects of the dialog.

Typical Approaches and Common Mistakes for Creating Spaces and Dialogs

Approaches for creating shared dialog include:

- Facilitating a welcome environment and creating neutrality, whereby all who attend feel comfortable enough to participate;
- Defining needs through shared conversation;
- Creating a flexible, shared space that allows for spontaneity to occur (breaking from “the script,” when and where it’s necessary); and
- Communicating during the meeting with all involved by encouraging participants to share their ideas and issues.

Collaboration in Practice: Pawnee Nation College

Back when we were first putting together Pawnee Nation College (PNC), we met with north-central Oklahoma tribal leaders the purpose of informing them about Pawnee Nation College as a new higher education option for post secondary students from their Nation. This meeting took place in 2007 in Stroud, Oklahoma, at the Sac & Fox Nation’s educational building.

As the meeting began, we asked Tribal leaders (elected officials, tribal administrators, education directors, etc.) what their greatest educational needs were at the post-secondary level. Most everyone agreed that local (community) colleges and universities struggled to meet the educational needs of their students. Several reasons were cited for this: 1) lack of Native instructors, 2) lack of student support specifically for their Native students (e.g., that student affairs professionals at mainstream serving institutions did not take the steps necessary to serve or understand Native students), 3) lack of degree or training programs to meet each tribal nation’s workforce needs, and 4) lack of academic support services.

From this, we began our discussion about PNC — its mission, vision, governance structure, academic partners, tuition and fee rates, proposed degree programs, projected number of faculty and students, fundraising goals and plans, and the institution’s strategic plan for pursuing accreditation. However, the thrust of the presentation focused on how PNC might move toward meeting the higher educational needs of those Tribes whose representatives were in attendance. With this, we had a long discussion about our accrediting partners, technology needs to deliver courses to off-site locations, how students could access financial aid, and identifying qualified Native instructors for any given course or degree program.

From this meeting, which lasted over three hours, we had big post-it notes up on the walls. We were able to solidify two partnerships — with the Sac & Fox Nation and with Osage Nation. (We had our partnership with the Pawnee Nation already in place.) Within a year, PNC was providing educational opportunities to students in Stroud (Sac & Fox) and Hominy (Osage) via interactive television, funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and National Science Foundation.

While we weren’t able to provide distance-learning opportunities to the other Tribal Nations, we did sign memoranda of understanding with them, creating educational partnerships with them. Eventually, all eight Tribal Nations within PNC’s service area signed agreements with the college. Such an achievement was symbolically significant for the College. It meant that area Tribal leaders (elected officials and administrators) had enough confidence in our fledgling school that they were willing to endorse PNC.

In the years since the meeting, PNC has served nearly 1000 students. By fall 2018, 79 students had earned college degrees and 37 had earned industry-recognized certificates — those students came from 24 different Tribal Nations. And though PNC is not yet accredited, it is serving the educational needs of area Tribal Nations and their students.

-Todd

- Conversely, common mistakes could be:
- Failing to reach an agreed-to endpoint that provides defined roles for all involved;
  - Failing to discuss goals (via shared dialogue);
  - Reacting to conflict by wilting from the issue at hand;
  - Forgetting to identify next steps (e.g., “who” is doing “what” by “when”) and expecting that others will take the burden of these next steps, particularly early on; and
  - Failing to follow up in a timely manner (within an agreed-to timeframe).

Sustaining Long-Term Collaborative Relationships

Long-term collaboration demands commitment, maintenance, and effective planning in order to be properly sustained. Clear communication, a well-designed project management plan, and respect for the approval processes of your partnering tribe are essential. Clear communication begins with seeking feedback early, and this trend should continue as your collaboration continues. Seek feedback often, and be willing to ask questions frequently about ways to move forward in the best way possible, especially as it concerns your co-facilitation of the project. You might ask, What else could we consider doing (to solve issue x,y, or z)? Doing this demonstrates that you’re not trying to come in and act like a know-it-all. Consistent follow up and over-communication is often good and necessary to assure that all involved are aligned regarding the project goals and methods.

A good project management plan, collaboratively and thoughtfully co-designed with the appropriate Tribal personnel and departments, will ensure a successful articulation and distribution of roles and responsibilities. Most researchers will be familiar with project management plans, but there are a few additional considerations for plans developed for tribal projects. Before you begin developing the plan, spend time determining that the appropriate tribal staff members are involved. Often researchers jump to assumptions (in proposals, or otherwise) thinking the tribal staff will do something or have the capacity to do something without asking the Tribe if they can, or the researcher does not talk to the right staff member. A good project management plan will define who is doing what by when. It is absolutely critical for each participant to understand both the project’s purpose, goals, motivation, expectations, etc. and their purpose, goals, motivation, exp ectations, etc. (For an example, see Appendix E) Tribal staff are full-time employees who (most likely) do community work too — they are not volunteers. It is not reasonable to expect them to drop everything to work on some aspect of your project when you make a request. This fact is why the project management plan is so critical. It will move the project toward smooth implementation. If you want their enthusiastic participation, it is best to structure the partnership in a way that minimizes additional workloads.

Regardless of the specific process, you will almost certainly need to obtain formal recognition or approval from the Tribal Administration, Government, or Council of your partnership with the

Tribe(s) or Tribal staff in order to conduct and carry out the proposed project. Sustaining your collaboration beyond initial contact will depend on having the necessary approvals in place as soon as possible, lest your partners get shackled by their administration for undertaking a project without approval. The chain-of-command varies among tribes, though you may encounter the following common means of formalizing your collaboration:

- Letter of support (or collaboration)
- Tribal resolution
- Online request forms, if applicable
- Memorandum of Understanding
- Informal approval from department head

Irrespective of the form that this acknowledgement might take, it is on you, as the outside researcher to seek and obtain official approval.

A Note on Flexibility

Projects grow and change as they develop and mature. The same will be the case with your research with tribal projects. The difference, however, is that the tribal partners will have a stronger presence in the direction that your project will take, and you will most likely underestimate the length of the developmental and relationship-building stages of the project. To address this complexity, be willing to break a project into multiple phases, and plan to adapt to the interests and wishes of your tribal collaborators. Consider adding contingencies to your project management plan to better adapt to these types of changes.

**Tribal Intellectual Property Concerns**

Collaboration does not entail a free license to share mutually generated information. Most Tribes do not want the data collected on their land or with their participation to be shared freely. You will need to design a data management plan early on to ensure that this desire is reflected in your work plan. If you are working with a Federal Agency or using Federal funding, be particularly careful, as many times information given to these agencies is subject to Freedom of Information Act requests. Always offer a copy of the data you collect to your Tribal partners so they can have it internally. (And see OP4 for more data protection protocols).

3.3 Framing Your Research Project

Are you a salesperson? The answer, of course, is no. Your job, as a collaborator, is not to “sell” your Tribal partners on your research, but rather to clearly offer space within your research agenda for the Tribe’s objectives and perspectives. In the context of collaborative methods, this idea takes on additional nuance. While earlier sections covered the basic principles of structuring and framing research relationships, this section will address specific methods you should consider when developing your project and, specifically, when communicating about your project to your potential partners.



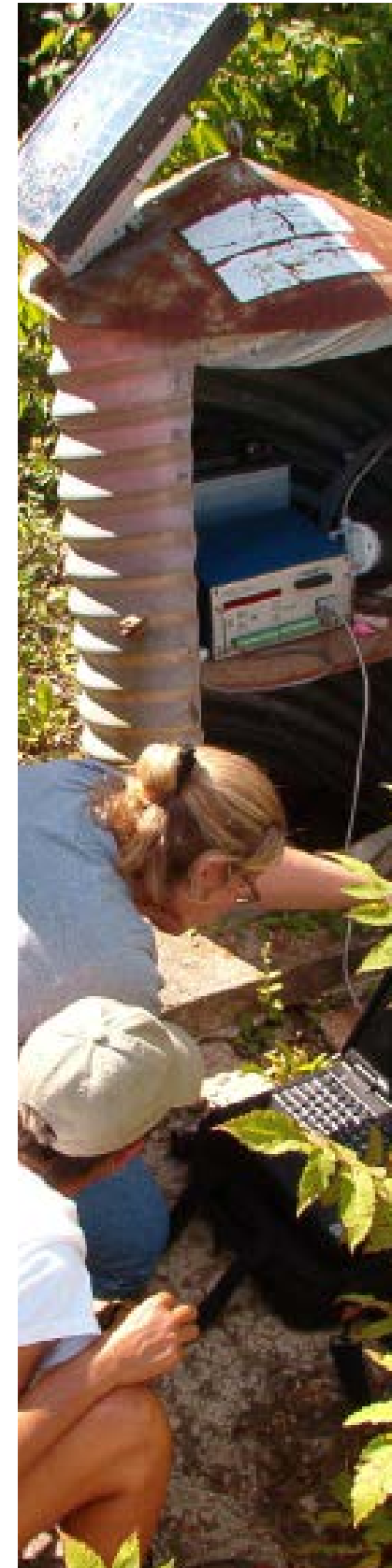
## On “Smooshing”

“Smooshing” is a term borrowed from the improvised theatre world but is quite at home describing the act of combining research ideas and philosophies into a single cohesive vision. In an improv context, smooshing allows two (or more) actors to build a world together by combining their mutual desires for a scene. For example, one actor might enter the scene by frantically looking for something in an imaginary set of cabinets. The next actor might enter the scene with the idea of being an ol’ timey chimney sweep. This second actor gets the opportunity to interpret what the first is doing and decides that, based on elements from his/her original intentions, they are looking for raccoons in the rafters. The scene evolves from there. Neither initial idea has been completely abandoned, but they have been “smooshed” together. The actors are able to realize both their visions, and create something new entirely, by entering their onstage relationship with the clear intention of accommodating and building upon what the other had to offer.

Obviously, there is not a one-to-one translation between the above example and what you ought to do in your research process. Both actors are on a roughly level playing field, while your research partners have centuries of disenfranchisement and oppression to contend with. They will probably not be as interested in “yes, and”-ing your initial proposal. But the goal of creating a mutually beneficial shared vision is still the same, and so are some of the methods.

Here’s how to take a collaborative approach to framing and “pitching” your research idea to tribal partners:

1. Have clear intentions. Characters are most compelling when they have a clear “want.” Likewise, as a researcher, you must be clear and honest about what your “want” is. It will be clear to your potential research partner(s) that you stand to benefit in some way from this research. Before you make initial contact with your partners, you owe it to yourself and them to engage in self-vetting. You must ask yourself: What is it about working with this community that appeals to you? Is it that you think Native people are “cool” because of stereotypes you’ve seen in pop culture? Is it that you feel bad about Manifest Destiny? Do Native people intersect with your area of study in some way that you find particularly compelling? There’s no wrong answer to this question, necessarily, but some answers are much flimsier than others and may not stand up to the scrutiny of your peers or partners. Now, before you’ve reached out, is the best time to realize this motivation and withdraw, if appropriate. The great thing about having strong intentions is that it allows people to build upon them, and it allows you to make a strong initiation.
2. Make a strong initiation. As an improviser, starting a scene by asking a basic question like “What are you doing?” is throwing your partner under the bus. You’re asking the other actors to do the hard work of world building for you. Likewise, if you begin your research relationship exclusively by asking what your partners need, you’re asking them to do



Researchers checking field equipment,  
Photograph by Kimberley Winton

the work of figuring out what you want and what you can provide. Chances are they will not want to do that. Now is the time to use the research you’ve done about the Tribal Nation and the context you hopefully understand. Think about what you want, and compare that to what you know about the Tribe. If you want to do biomedical research, and you know that the Nation has a Tribal college, could you provide some opportunities for students from the college in your research? You should consider potentially pre-smooshing some of your ideas with what the tribe might want, if only to demonstrate that’s the direction you’re going with your thinking. In either case, don’t mask your own intentions and give them something to “yes, and” about.

3. Provide something of value. Improvisers often talk about “giving gifts” to their scene partners, whether that’s establishing a mutual location or fleshing out character traits. As a research partner, you want to begin your relationship by demonstrating that you are interested in collaboration, so think about how you might be able to provide something of similar value immediately. What might your unique contribution be, given your position, education, life history, etc.? Perhaps you could track down all of the results of the research your “helicopter” predecessors promised to give but never delivered on. Are there any photographs or archives related to the Nation in your university that your potential partners might not have seen or have access to? Think along these lines and try to come up with something they might find useful or could provide an immediate benefit. Remember that this is not the start of a transaction. The purpose of arriving with something in hand, be it physical data or simply an outline for something collaborative, is to communicate your intentions: “I have an idea, but I want you to be part of it. I have already prepared and made space in anticipation of your needs.”
4. Now smoosh! It is time to smoosh, which perhaps is best understood by an example: Researcher: “I would like to research the impacts of dirt roads on local air quality in your community. I’m interested in this because I think

the organization I represent has historically neglected its responsibility to consult and collaborate with Tribal nations. I believe in the mission of my organization but feel badly about that, so I wanted to reach out and see if we could be of value to you. In addition to the data that we would get, your department would be able to find out exactly how much of a public health impact the dirt roads have on your citizens. We also have some other folks at our organization that could help figure out a way to mitigate some of those impacts, if it turns out they are substantial, or help find funding to pave the roads altogether if that's an avenue of interest."

Researcher (continues): "In preparation for our meeting, I found some data from other communities on the same topic. I thought you could potentially use it as an analogue or a substitute if you didn't want to do a whole project with us, or if you weren't interested in partnering at all."

Tribe: "Well, we are generally more concerned about indoor air quality."

Researcher: "We could take indoor air samples and break down the composition. That way we could figure out what the biggest sources of local indoor air pollution are, and how much of the dust from the roads is making it inside. Would that be useful?"

In this example, the researcher:

- Established a clear desire.
- Established why they wanted it.
- Created space in that vision: "...reach out and see if we could be of value to you."
- Discussed a specific potential long-term value to the potential partner based on knowledge about their department's responsibilities, but indicated that this is open-ended based their mutual needs.
- Indicated some other resources that their organization has access to and can provide.
- Provided something of immediate value (data) that their collaborator may not have had access to or time to retrieve.
- Indicated that their collaboration was tentative on their mutual interest and benefit (and, through the data, actually provided means to avoid it completely).
- When confronted with an alternative vision, smooched the two presented ideas to find a reasonable middle ground that could potentially serve both needs.

The essence of "smooshing," if one can look beyond the silly name, is the intention of creating a space for collaboration from the outset. Framing your research as an open-ended scene, without masking or abandoning your own intentions, is essential to create the right environment for collaborative research. There are certainly other methods to achieve the same end, but the outcome ought to be the same: A mutual understanding and trusting relationship upon which a strong, collaborative relationship could be built.

## Operating Principle 4: Protocols

Thus far, our discussion has centered on internal mechanisms that you can adopt and use to guide your own behavior. The authors of the document prioritize this information over behavioral protocols because protocols cannot possibly prepare someone for the wide range of situations you may encounter when doing your work. Yet protocols can be helpful. The protocols below are all derived from the context, principles, and methods described in earlier sections, and you should return to OPs 1–3 in cases when the protocols seem inadequate.

As highlighted from the outset, perhaps the most important traits of a competent researcher, in this context, are sensitivity and attention. Be sensitive, and pay attention. No protocols are set in stone; they are merely guidelines projected from the values developed in earlier sections (and through experiences we've gained from working over four decades in Indian Country). You may find some protocols applicable to your work, or you may find that none are relevant. There are over 570 Federally recognized Tribes in the United States and many more ways to ethically approach partnering with Tribal nations. Consider what follows to be a rubric, but don't feel beholden to these protocols in cases where they feel inappropriate.

OP4 is divided into three sections:

### 4.1 Communication Protocols

### 4.2 Maintaining Relationships

### 4.3 Final Thoughts

Section 4.1 provides protocols relevant to the initial contact and development of relationships, such as tips for specific situations (e.g., interviews). Section 4.2 deals with protocols related to the long-term sustainability of working relationships, including situations where you might be soliciting feedback on project results. Section 4.3 provides our closing thoughts.

*"The First Thanksgiving"*  
by Jean Leon Gerome Ferris





## 4.1 Communication Protocols

### Establishing Contact

Seek initial contact through a phone call or through a friend, acquaintance, tribal liaison, or other tribal member who knows the leadership. Do not seek initial contact through cold emails. It typically does not work. People want to hear your voice, see your face, and determine how genuine you are. Better approaches, in descending order of efficacy, include:

- Have someone who is already well acquainted with the Nation bring you to an existing event or host you at an introductory meeting;
- Have someone who is well acquainted with the Nation introduce you by email or over the phone;
- Show up at a public event involving the Nation and introduce yourself; and
- Develop a well-prepared cold-call.

Initially, offer to meet at a location on tribal land – whether tribal headquarters, in the town in which the tribe is located, or at their preferred location. The point is: you go to them.

### Meeting and Greeting

As an academic, you probably have visited other countries for conferences, meetings, or research collaborations. You likely did some background reading to learn what to do and not to do when visiting collaborators of a different culture. A similar process is needed when working with Indigenous peoples. Although different Nations have different norms, the following guidance is generally applicable for meeting and greeting people of the 39 Tribal Nations that reside within Oklahoma.

- Don't shake hands like you're meeting John Wayne or General George Armstrong Custer. Instead, respond to their handshake with an equal amount of pressure. (Note: if you are meeting a Native woman, let her extend her hand first.)
- Come prepared with documents related to your project, including a one-page plain-language summary.
- If you are offered food or beverages, accept them.
- If you are hosting the meeting, provide food. Often diabetic-friendly snacks that are low in sugar are ideal.
- Find out whether this meeting would be an appropriate setting for bringing a gift (see On Giving Gifts below).
- Know and use the appropriate names or terms for the Nation or community. Also learn the correct pronunciation.
- If hosting a meeting, leave space for or request an invocation or opening prayer. Introductions are generally a good idea. For meetings that involved a dozen or more people, leave at least the first hour of a meeting flexible to account for these welcomes and different arrival times.

- Once a researcher begins meeting regularly with members from a specific Tribe, it is sometimes acceptable to learn how to say "hello" and "thank you" in the relevant Native language.
- Be willing to engage in casual introductory conversation about life and background with potential partners, particularly before talking about other project-related issues.
- Keep careful track of what you promise to do during meetings, and don't over-commit to things you can't do. After the meeting, follow up as soon as possible (i.e., in no more than 24 hours). If you can't deliver on promises you made within that time period, provide an update on the progress you've made during that time and set out a clear outline of how long it will take to follow through.

### General Communication

A few communication principles will go a long way in demonstrating your ability to work well with others, especially Tribal collaborators and their governing bodies:

- Do not interrupt a speaker (especially a Tribal elder or leader).
- Listen. Spend much more time listening than talking.
- Pay attention.
- If doing an interview or facilitating a meeting, consider that some individuals might have arrived with something to say. Rather than beginning by going down a specific line of questioning, give individuals, particularly elders, an open invitation to speak their mind. Be forewarned — what they have to say may continue for a while.
- Don't be rushed or attempt to rush others.
- Be careful to avoid jargon.
- It should go without saying, but don't touch anything that you haven't been prompted to touch (clothing, objects, people, etc.)
- 

### Interviews and Documentation

Most people generally don't like being recorded or studied by strangers; it's a particularly sensitive request in Tribal communities. You'll likely encounter resistance if you start your first meeting with a person by immediately asking permission to record audio or video. Recording larger meetings (particularly those you are not hosting) is a poor idea generally. In some tribal communities, recording, taking pictures, or making sketches is forbidden. Ideally, your project will be structured in such a way that you are only recording in situations when it has been specifically requested by your Tribal partners or the Nation itself, but here are some options to consider if your project requires you to produce documentation of some kind:

- Meet with your prospective interview subjects a couple of times to establish a relationship before requesting to record them on camera or audio.
- Take some basic notes during or immediately after your meeting. Let them know you plan on taking some notes.

## Listening

Denying someone the chance to speak is disrespectful and will hurt your ability to build relationships. Similarly, it is very disrespectful to interrupt someone, even if you are asking a question, because you are impeding on their turn to speak. It is not bad to ask questions, but if you listen and observe, then your question may be answered by continuing to listen to what the person has to say. If you do need to interrupt a tribal member, especially an elder, for clarification on something they have said, you need to be sure to start with an apology for interrupting, and then tell them you are wanting clarification on what they had just said.

– Aaron

- Bringing along a notetaker. Make sure to introduce this notetaker to whomever you are meeting. This opportunity could be great for a Native student.

If you are hosting a meeting and you need to record audio or video, you **MUST** ask permission. (This requirement should hopefully seem obvious by now!) If someone refuses, you **MUST** cease recording immediately and make it clear that you are doing so. Generally, it's best to avoid taking audio or video of a meeting you are hosting, particularly if you're meeting people for the first time.

If you are in a situation where you have taken audio or video (having conducted an interview, for example), make sure to provide a copy of the interview in DVD or CD format as soon as possible. A different hard-copy medium may be acceptable, depending on the tech-savviness of the person, but make sure you provide something physical (like a USB stick). Offering to share notes also may be useful.

Be clear with how the recordings will be used and follow up regularly. If there are changes to how the material will be used, you **MUST** ask permission of all parties involved.

If conducting interviews with elders or other cultural experts, it is often a good idea to provide an honorarium. Like gifts (discussed in the next section), these are not payment remitted for services rendered, rather recognition for the value of their contribution. It's different. Often the right move is to not mention the honorarium in advance but to send it along with their hard copy of the recording.

## On Gift Giving and Receiving

Giving gifts to your Tribal partners is important, but is not something that should be done all the time. Providing a leader or elder with a gift will undoubtedly help you to grow your relationship with that particular tribe. Common gift items include Pendleton blankets, sage, braided sweetgrass, and tobacco. A good time to present gifts is anytime you meet an elder and at the completion of any project.

Other gift items include food or fruit baskets. These are especially useful if there are several people you want to present gifts to – like at a meeting. Although often forgotten by most Americans today, the gift of food has an important meaning; many Native societies view the gift of food as someone providing them with a gift to nourish their bodies, and thus a gift of life. In many Tribal Nations, food is one of the most considerate gifts you can give or receive.

Receiving gifts properly also is important. If you were presented with a gift, you should take it. Refusing a gift is extremely disrespectful and could cause some of the relationships you have made to erode. If you are not allowed to receive gifts because of a policy with your organization, you should accept the gift and then present it to your agency or organization. If appropriate, the gift could be placed in an area shared by everyone working at your organization, such as the break room. Finally, never return a gift you have received. Once you accept a gift, it is yours or your organization's.

– Aaron

I thought it was really interesting when I started this job that researchers actually include [money] in their grants for things like tobacco. They would take tobacco to the elders when they interviewed them or met with them. It's not a form of payment, but of respect and acknowledgement of their representation in their community. I myself have also received gifts for the things I have done in Indian Country, often a lot of food. I've received salmon, huckleberry jam, and all sorts of traditional foods that I've been able to learn about and learn how to cook over the years.

– April



### Honoring with Food

When I was in Pawnee, I wanted to do some research when I started working for the Tribe about traditional Pawnee education and how the Tribe used to educate its children pre-contact (with Europeans) as well as post-contact. What I did was I asked my wife’s grandmother how I should go about asking somebody, because I knew who I needed to talk to in the Tribe, but I wasn’t necessarily sure how to start the dialogue. She told me that I needed to go to the store and buy food, and then go to this person and take the food to them. It was a food basket that included bread, milk, eggs, meat, and potatoes. I took that bag of groceries to their house and knocked on the door and when they answered, I told them what I wanted to do, that I had some research that I wanted to do about traditional Pawnee education, and I said ‘I’ve got this basket of food for you as a token of my appreciation for letting me come and see you today.’ The person said ‘okay’ and thought about it for a minute, was fairly deliberate and kind of quiet, and then he said ‘the folks that you have spoken to have taught you the right way to do this, and I would be happy for you to come in and give me this basket so that I can have nourishment in my body and be able to live, so please come in and let’s visit.’ That resulted in a long conversation that allowed me to understand how Pawnees were traditionally educated in the towns in Nebraska, pre-Oklahoma. It was greatly beneficial for me and, of course, he was able to have a good meal, so it was good reciprocity that way.

– Todd

### 4.2 Maintaining Relationships

It is generally easier to maintain relationships than to begin them, but as the historical context indicates, many researchers have failed in this regard. As previously discussed, a research relationship is a long-term commitment. If you’re at this point, hopefully you’ve self-vetted and confirmed that you are willing to “go the distance” with your research partners, on this project and likely others. A researcher’s credibility, and their ability to maintain ethical, long-term research partnerships, hinges (in part) on their timely completion of research projects, their open and continuous sharing of research results, and their willingness to seek out tribal input. Here’s how to keep things on good terms:

- Follow through. Following through on commitments made to tribal partners as soon as possible is imperative to a healthy working relationship, particularly considering how long things might take on the Tribal administrative side.
- Researchers should reach out to their partners well before the arrival of any deadline. You may need to start the process earlier than you typically would to finish close to your target time. For example, letters of support typically require at least two weeks (and often a month or more) to get the leadership’s signature. If you need or want to reach out to tribal leader-

- ship, be aware that many councils meet infrequently, often only once per month.
- Seek input on drafts of any publication that relates to the project. Researchers are responsible for ensuring Tribal partners are given adequate time to comment and respond to anything that gets written or submitted on behalf of the project. When seeking tribal input, it’s important to offer drafts, not final copies. Make it clear that you are doing so. Consider even replacing the title with “DRAFT” or “TITLE TO BE DETERMINED” or “UNTITLED XX TRIBAL NATION PROJECT”.
  - Ensure review and approval of all drafts and presentations prior to publication or presenting. This review is not a violation of academic freedom and scientific mission. It is their opportunity to participate in the interpretation of the findings
  - When you do receive feedback, make it clear how you are incorporating it. Thank them for their feedback and, when you follow up, identify exactly what you have changed in response.
  - Consider inviting Tribal community members or Tribal staff to participate in or watch presentations of the findings. Again, doing this at a Tribal Nation’s headquarters is key.
  - Ensure all interested partners receive copies of all the data, presentations, and publications. Also ensure access to any information database developed
  - Keep going back to visit throughout the project. Do what you need to do so that in-person meetings happen. A strong project plan and relationships with multiple people in the relevant Tribal departments and administration can help ensure that a researcher continues to do ethical, pertinent work, though staff changes and turnover may occur. Frequent visits are important to keep research relationships strong and communication open.
  - Update your vocabulary regularly. Circumstances change, and its highly likely that, if you maintain a relationship over a long period, the words people use to describe ideas, institutions, objects, etc. related to your project will change. Be mindful of how other people use language and adapt accordingly.

### Feedback

It’s up to you as a researcher to find creative ways of incorporating feedback into your project. In one non-research instance, I was working with an ad-hoc Tribal working group to craft a mutual vision statement. We wanted to make sure that everyone’s input was being evaluated and included, so I prompted everyone to send their own version of the vision statement and goals. I took lines or language from each person’s version and cobbled together a new, hybridized version. Luckily, in this case everyone’s central ideas were fairly parallel. In order to make it clear that it had been a true collaboration, I sent back my version with each person’s contributions highlighted and defined where they appeared in the final statement. That way, I made it clear that we had seen and used each person’s contributions.

– Atty

Remember, by now you're in this for the long haul. That doesn't mean you can't do other kinds of work, or work on other projects, or change jobs or institutions. It does mean that your partners will want to hear from you from time to time, particularly if there's been a development in the project. It does mean that you're responsible for checking in and ensuring that the research products you've created are useful, and if they're not, whether there's a way of altering them so they're useful or making something else. It means that your commitment to collaboration doesn't end when grant funding runs out. Life circumstances might force you to abandon some projects, but it's up to you to ensure that this is either unlikely to affect your partners or that there is a plan in place for moving ahead so your departure doesn't negatively impact your partners. Even long after your project ends, your partners may contact you for related reasons, even if the first project didn't lead to others, as it often does.

**Elders will remember and value any respect you show them, but they also will remember any disrespect you show them.**

**Scientific Jargon**

Often a researcher isn't aware of some of the language or the way things are defined in Indian Country. One of my most recent examples of this had to do with a project that they wanted to study the value of ecosystems, or what we call "ecosystem services" in Western science. This sort of rubbed some of the communities [the wrong way] just by the language and [their] not defining those terms. In Indian Country, subsistence or ecosystems often mean a much broader sort of context and are spiritual and may have a medicinal use or value. They couldn't necessarily think of those things or those ecosystems on a sense of how do we value those things and putting a number or quantification to those things. In other communities, subsistence is only referred to as a food source and so it's a different meaning. So thinking about how these terms might be defined and how to communicate what you're trying to do in these communities is essential to your research project.

– April

**4.3 Final Thoughts**

This guidebook has largely and rightfully been concerned with how you as a researcher can be a better research partner and cultivate better relationships. This focus is justified by centuries of exploitation by researchers serving their own interests and ignoring the humanity, sovereignty, and needs of their research partners. Our goal in writing this document has been to facilitate a better research process, ensure that potential Tribal partners of our institutions are not burdened or exploited by shoddy or unnecessary research, and improve the reputation of our institutions and its researchers by developing better research practices and relationships. Other than the higher



*Sia: Comanche Ethno-Ornithological Initiative*

quality of research produced by effective research relationships, we have not concerned ourselves with describing the potential personal advantages of investing time and attention in building these relationships. But it is true that developing these relationships will often lead to auxiliary benefits that, while not the reason to be engaged in the work, make the process more worthwhile. The authors of this document have met spouses, friends, important colleagues, and made major career advancements as a result of investing time and attention into their research process. We stuck around long enough to see positive manifestations of our work, whether through opportunities created for Tribal citizens or research partners, Tribal projects that received funding based on mutual research, or institutions that received accreditation or some other form of legitimacy. In no case were these auxiliary benefits the original goal of our research processes, nor should the desire for self-actualization by "helping" Tribal peoples be the objective that drives you to this work. By now, hopefully you understand that an ethical research process is a worthwhile end in and of itself. But good processes yield good works, both for you and your partners.

Where does your attention lie? We trust that most of the people are going to know how to serve their own interests. What we want is for readers of the document to understand is how to approach the process of ethical research, of developing relationships, of following through, with the same care and attention. Serve the process, and the process will serve both you and your partners.

We'd like to thank all of the partners, mentors, teachers, and leaders who have helped shape the experiences that informed this guidebook. We hope that it proves useful.



### Create a Legacy

When I was a grad student at Oklahoma State University, I started working on a project about a baseball player names Moses Yellow Horse who was said to be the first full-blood Indian in the Major Leagues. He played for the Pittsburgh Pirates in 1921 and 22. That work became my dissertation and then, in 2002, was published as a book with Holy Cow Press. From that, the Pawnee Nation decided that they wanted to hire me, even though the narrative is not quite that simple, it’s a bit more complicated, and I started working for the Pawnee Nation. I was not a helicopter researcher, I did my work and did not just send a box of the books to the tribe and say ‘thank you.’ I got hired by the Pawnee Nation as a result of the research I did and I wanted to give back to the Tribe. So, in 2003 and 2004, I started working on a project that eventually led to the establishment of Pawnee Nation College in 2004, which is still continuing to operate today. That manifestation created opportunities for Pawnee, other Native students, and even non-Native students in the Pawnee area to go to college and attain associate degrees, GEDs, or certifications that they could use to advance in their careers and in their lives.

– Todd

We’ll leave you with a reiteration of this quote from Rex Tilousi, the Havasupai Nation Chairman during the period the Tribe was dealing with the ramifications of the University of Arizona debacle:

**“All I know is I feel like we turned students into doctors, turned students into professors. All this education we got for so many people, I just don’t see what we got out of all this.”**

Traditional Native Values	Traditional Euro-American Values
Cooperation, sharing, giving, humility	Competition, possession, accomplishment
Group harmony	Individual achievement
Time is flexible, enjoy the present	Time is money
Non-interference, silence is valued	Giving advice, directing a conversation
Emotional control, contemplation	Action, direct questioning, confrontation
Patience, group consensus for decision	Rapid responses and quick decision-making
Eye contact can be a sign of aggression	Eye contact a sign of respect
Only shake hands with friends	Firm handshake as a common greeting
Take time for contemplation	Action instead of inaction

*Stromnes-Elias, Katja, 2007: Improving Cross-cultural Communication: Awareness of Native American Cultures. Issue brief no. 2. Missoula, MT: American Indian Disability Technical Assistance Center.*

# Appendices

## Appendix A

Land Acknowledgement from the University of Oklahoma:

“I’d like to recognize that the land on which the University of Oklahoma now resides was the traditional home of the Caddo Nation and the Wichita & Affiliated Tribes. This territory once served as a hunting ground, trade exchange point, and migration route for the Apache, Comanche, Kiowa, and Osage Nations. Today, 39 Tribal Nations dwell in the state of Oklahoma as a result of settler and colonial policies that were designed to assimilate Native people.”

## Appendix B

Additional information about the 39 Indian Nations across Oklahoma.

## Appendix C

Significant Native Scholar in Native Science

## Appendix E

Example Project Management Plan

## Appendix D

Most universities have programs that support their commitment to the protection of human participants in research. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is responsible for reviewing research submissions that involve human subjects and assess that it adequately meets the criteria for approval set forth by the federal and state regulations and the university policies and procedures. All researchers and collaborators involved in the research projects involving human subjects must complete the Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI) training and submit an IRB proposal. The link to the University of Oklahoma Human Research and Participant Protection is <http://compliance.ouhsc.edu/hrpp/Home.aspx>.

An increasing number of Tribes are forming their own IRBs under 45 CFR 46. The Tribal IRBs are needed because the potential for adverse consequences at a community or governmental level that are unrecognized by academic researchers. Tribal IRBs also are needed to protect the unique tribal cultures. Research projects within a tribal jurisdiction and involving tribal citizens must have both the Tribal IRB (that has its own IRB) or the local Indian Health Service (IHS) IRB and the University IRB. Tribal IRBs are typically in health departments due to the large number of research projects addressing tribal health concerns. The below table includes the Oklahoma Tribal IRBs and the contact information.

### Cherokee Nation

Sohail Kahn, MBBS, MPH, CIP Chair, Cherokee Nation IRB	1296 Skill Center Circle, Building 3 Tahlequah, OK 74464 -OR- P.O. Box 948 Tahlequah, OK 74465	(918) 453-5000 ext 5187 (918) 453-1127 (FAX) irb@cherokee.org <a href="https://irb.cherokee.org">https://irb.cherokee.org</a>	Meet Monthly (2nd Wednesday)
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### Chickasaw Nation

Bobby Saunkeah, RN, MSHCE, CIP, Chair, Chickasaw Nation IRB	Chickasaw Nation Medical Center 1921 Stonecipher Blvd. Ada, OK 74820	(580) 421-4562 (580)272-2737 Bobby.Saunkeah@Chickasaw.net Michael.Peercy@Chicksaw.net	Meets Monthly
Michael Peercy, MPH, MT(ASCP)H, IRB Admin.			



Choctaw Nation

Carey M. Fuller	IRB Manager	918-567-7000 ext. 6014	Meet Monthly
CHRC IRB	Software -	580-745-9600 (Fax)	4th Wednesday
Administrator	Submission	CMFuller@cnhsa.com	
Director		dfwharton@cnhsa.com	

David F.  
Wharton  
MPH, RN  
Scientific Co.  
Chair

Oklahoma City Area-IHS

Ryan	701 Market Drive	405-951-3928
Schupbach IRB	Oklahoma City, OK	405-951-3904 (fax)
Co-Chair	73114	Ryan.schupbach@ihs.gov
Indian Health Service		

College of Muscogee Nation

Leeanna	2170 Raven Circle	918-549-2828	Meet as needed
Tomah-Chair	PO Box 917	918-549-2880 (fax)	
	Okmulgee, OK 74447	ltomah@cmn.edu	

Each Tribal IRB should be contacted as early as possible and inquired about their approval process and required documents for IRB proposal submission. Each tribe has their own separate processes and different levels of review.

The letter of support from an appropriate tribal department should be included that states that they are aware of the research project; aware of any research conducted at a tribal facility or event; none of your staff will be involved in conducting the human research only the researchers permitted in the IRB proposal; and the tribal department supports the project.

The researcher then receives a letter of approval from the tribal IRB. This letter sometimes states an approval time period and requests for annual reviews. This letter of approval is required for consideration by the university IRB. If the tribe does not have its own tribal IRB, then a Tribal Council Resolution or approval letter from an authorized Tribal Health Official is required.

Tribal IRBs can be invaluable contacts (tools, if you will) to help you initially connect with tribes. Your Tribal IRB point of contact can help you in several ways. The Tribal IRBs may help you:

1. Understand the tribal research needs and be aware of the tribal research opportunities.
2. Identify tribal staff to work with.
3. Understand how to assist in building the tribal staff capacity to work with universities and more specifically with your department and not be an impediment or burden on them. Sometimes the tribe is not ready for some types of research and the tribe may need assistance on how to develop; build upon; and later make the research easier to work toward.
4. Assist researchers in informing tribal staff with the IRB process and CITI training.
5. Assist you with letters of support for your professional development and career path.

Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR):

Community based participatory research, or community-engaged research, is most often the best way to work with Tribal communities. By using these guidelines, the researcher is taking into account the needs of the Tribe(s) prior to any research activities. Tribal representatives should be involved with the project prior to the creation of the research question. The Tribe should be involved in every step of the creative process, and should be an equal partner in the project. The research should be driven by the needs and strengths of the community, and the results should benefit the community.

Tribal Research:

1. Community Protections – Tribal IRBs often apply the principles of the Belmont Report (Beneficence, Justice, and Respect for Persons) to the community as a whole in addition to the individual participants. The Tribal IRB will review the protocol to verify that it, in no way, endangers the unique culture and heritage of the Tribe. Not all Tribes will have an official IRB, but most will have some type of process to follow (Research Review Board, Tribal Council, etc.).
2. Ownership of Data – As sovereign nations, Tribes retain ownership of all data collected during the research project. Data sharing agreements can be negotiated to ensure that the researcher has adequate freedom to complete the project while the Tribe ensures that the data are protected. It is the joint responsibility of the Tribe and the researcher to include intellectual property rights in the agreements.
3. Editorial Review – Tribal IRBs review all manuscripts and presentation/abstracts related to research projects. It is best to work closely in partnership with Tribes to ensure that all manuscripts and presentations are acceptable to the Tribal nation.
4. Dissemination of Results – Prior to publishing or presenting results of any research project, dissemination to the Tribal community should occur. The community should have the opportunity to review and comment on the results prior to any external dissemination. This also should include how the results benefit the community.

Table of Oklahoma Indian Nations

Tribe/Nation	Original Homeland	Last Location before Permanent Relocation	Date of Relocation	Current Headquarters
Absentee Shawnee Tribe	Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Pennsylvania	Missouri, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas	1854, 1859	Shawnee, OK
Alabama Quassarte Tribal Town	Mississippi	Georgia	1836	Wetumka, OK
Apache Tribe of Oklahoma	Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico	Oklahoma, Texas	1867	Anadarko, OK
Caddo Nation of Oklahoma	Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas	Oklahoma, Texas	1872	Binger, OK
Cherokee Nation	Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia	Tennessee,Georgia, North Carolina, Alabama	1835	Tahlequah, OK
Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes	Wyoming, Missouri, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota	Nebraska, Kansas	1869	Concho, OK
Chickasaw Nation	Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, Arkansas	Mississippi, Alabama	1837	Ada, OK
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma	Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Louisiana, Arkansas	Mississippi	1830	Durant, OK



Tribe/Nation	Original Homeland	Last Location before Permanent Relocation	Date of Relocation	Current Headquarters
<b>Citizen Potawatomi Nation</b>	Michigan, Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, Ohio	Kansas	1867	Shawnee, OK
<b>Comanche Nation of Oklahoma</b>	Wyoming, Colorado, Nebraska, Kansas	Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma	1867	Lawton, OK
<b>Delaware Nation</b>	New Jersey, New York, Delaware, Pennsylvania	Texas	1859	Anadarko, OK
<b>Delaware Tribe of Indians</b>	New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, Delaware	Kansas	1867	Bartlesville, OK
<b>Eastern Shawnee Tribe of Oklahoma</b>	West Virginia, Kentucky, Ohio	Ohio	1831	Seneca, MO
<b>Fort Sill Apache Tribe of Oklahoma</b>	New Mexico, Arizona, Texas	Arizona, New Mexico, Florida	1892	Apache, OK
<b>Iowa Tribe of Oklahoma</b>	Iowa	Kansas	1883	Perkins, OK
<b>Kaw Nation</b>	Kansas, Missouri	Kansas	1872	Kaw City, OK
<b>Kialegee Tribal Town</b>	Alabama, Georgia	Alabama	1832	Wetumka, OK
<b>Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma</b>	Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin	Kansas, Texas	1883	McLoud, OK
<b>Kiowa Tribe of Oklahoma</b>	Canada, Montana, South Dakota, Wyoming, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska	Texas, Oklahoma	1867	Carnegie, OK

Tribe/Nation	Original Homeland	Last Location before Permanent Relocation	Date of Relocation	Current Headquarters
<b>Miami Tribe of Oklahoma</b>	Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin	Kansas	1867	Miami, OK
<b>Modoc Tribe of Oklahoma</b>	California, Oregon	California, Oregon	1874	Miami, OK
<b>Muscogee (Creek) Nation</b>	Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina	Georgia, Alabama	1832	Okmulgee, OK
<b>Osage Nation</b>	Kansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Arkansas	Kansas	1870	Pawhuska, OK
<b>Otoe-Missouria Tribe</b>	Nebraska, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas	Kansas, Nebraska	1881	Red Rock, OK
<b>Ottawa Tribe of Oklahoma</b>	Canada, Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois	Kansas	1862	Miami, OK
<b>Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma</b>	Nebraska, Kansas	Nebraska	1876	Pawnee, OK
<b>Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma</b>	Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Missouri	Kansas	1857	Miami, OK
<b>Ponca Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma</b>	Kentucky, Indiana, Nebraska, South Dakota	Nebraska	1877	White Eagle, OK
<b>Quapaw Tribe of Oklahoma</b>	Arkansas, Mississippi, Tennessee	Arkansas	1833	Quapaw, OK
<b>Sac &amp; Fox Nation</b>	Michigan, Wisconsin	Kansas	1867	Stroud, OK

Tribe/Nation	Original Homeland	Last Location before Permanent Relocation	Date of Relocation	Current Headquarters
<b>Seminole Nation of Oklahoma</b>	Florida	Florida	1832	Wewoka, OK
<b>Seneca-Cayuga Tribe of Oklahoma</b>	New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio	Ohio	1831-1832	Miami, OK
<b>Shawnee Tribe</b>	Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, Ohio, Georgia, Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Kentucky	Kansas	1869	Miami, OK
<b>Thlopthlocco Tribal Town</b>	Alabama, Georgia	Alabama	1832	Okemah, OK
<b>Tonkawa Tribe</b>	Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico	Texas	1859	Tonkawa, OK
<b>United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma</b>	North Carolina, Tennessee, South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama	North Carolina	1835	Park Hill, OK
<b>Wichita and Affiliated Tribes</b>	Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas	Oklahoma, Texas	1859	Anadarko, OK
<b>Wyandotte Nation</b>	Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin	Kansas	1867	Wyandotte, OK
<b>Yuchi (Euchee) Tribe of Indians</b>	Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama	Georgia	1832	Sapulpa, OK

## Resources and References

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1 Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart is credited with developing a model for historical trauma, initially for the Lakota and which was later expanded to include all indigenous populations around the world.

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National Congress of American Indians: [http://www.ncai.org/Tribal\\_Nations\\_-\\_the\\_United\\_States.pdf](http://www.ncai.org/Tribal_Nations_-_the_United_States.pdf) (Treaties, obligations, broken treaties, etc.)

Sovereignty: <https://sovnationcenter.okstate.edu/sovereignty-speaks-%C2%A9>.

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<http://red-face.us/>

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