



Research, Ethnic Fraud, and the Academy: A Protocol for Working with Indigenous Communities and Peoples

¹ have set aside historic funding levels for Indigenous-related research, which is cause for optimism. But there are also many reasons to be cautious.

Indigenous Peoples and communities must also be attentive to potential for harm that this new era presents to Indigenous nations and their communities by opportunistic, exploitative, and unscrupulous settler-researchers.

While universities, colleges, and other research institutions embrace notions of Indigenization and decolonization, there are considerable concerns about settler-colonial ethics and how they continue to dominant research design and direction. With notions of Reconciliation and Indigenization finding themselves on administrative agendas, they may be reproducing the outcomes that Vine Deloria Jr. railed at 50 years ago. In 1969, Deloria lamented that, “Indians have been cursed above all other people in history. Indians have anthropologists” (Deloria, 1969, p. 78). Deloria went on to highlight the problematic nature of settler ethics in research, underscoring the unresponsiveness of outsider policy: “we should not be objects of observations for those who do nothing to help us” (Deloria, 1969, p. 94)².

Policy and programming for Indigenous public and primary healthcare—one of the most pressing concerns for Indigenous peoples—seems to be the new Anthropology.

But considering that:

- The responsibilities, privileges, and burdens associated with seeking research funding and academic positions (including doctoral positions) reserved for Indigenous persons should be accorded to only those with Indigenous identity.
- Individuals who self-identify as Indigenous, especially in a research and academic context, have a responsibility to clearly articulate and declare their connections to established, legitimate Indigenous communities, thus confirming their connection to family and community.
- Indigenous researchers and/or academics should be supported to commit their time and efforts to guide, mentor, or supervise those who are Indigenous, if those students can fulfill their self-identification responsibilities as set out below.

COMPONENTS AND COMMITMENTS OF RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Considering all of the above, we aim to provide plain language guidelines to assist discussions of assertions and claims of Indigenous identity, particularly in the academy. There is a growing practice of self-Indigenization and race-shifting creeping into these spaces and it is an abhorrent practice. An increasing number of non-Indigenous people are self-identifying as Indigenous for the sake of personal, professional, positional, and financial gain.

We believe this protocol can begin the development of culturally appropriate, reciprocal, and transparent ways of ongoing engagement with Indigenous Peoples within the academy; and to pragmatically address claims of self-Indigenization.

Indigenous students commit to:

- Provide, in writing or orally, a declaration of their familial connections to community;
- Provide reasonable assurances, in writing or orally, that the

Even while researching us, colonial institutions appear to be committed to excluding Indigenous Peoples at every stage of the research development.

In contrast, our labour is also in demand largely outside our communities. Indigenous Elders, knowledge keepers, community members, students, and academics are increasingly being asked to engage with Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers.

But other than self-declarations of Indigeneity, there are few requirements to explain how one is actually Indigenous in post-secondary institutions.

In our current colonial moment, research on Indigenous peoples – and the university itself – is deeply implicated in the direction of every conceivable facet ensnared by settler public policy, running the gamut of the social, economic, and cultural. As is well known, the history of Indigenous public policy has been impelled by non-Indigenous priorities and conducted by non-Indigenous sources with the purposes of civilization, assimilation, or death. We are committed to the continuation of Indigenous life as determined by Indigenous Peoples.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Leroux, D. (n.d.). Court cases: Powley-related “Eastern métis” cases in Québec, New Brunswick & Nova Scotia. Retrieved from