

Research Guidelines

First Peoples Working Group,
Institut nordique du Québec

Discussion Paper
August 15, 2017

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Table of Contents

CREDITS.....	2
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
POSITION STATEMENT	4
INQ FIRST PEOPLES WORKING GROUP	4
<i>Message from FPWG to researchers and students</i>	4
INTRODUCTION.....	5
<i>Methodology</i>	5
RESEARCH IN THE NORTH.....	6
RESEARCH AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES	6
<i>FPWG: Defining the North</i>	6
PRINCIPLES OF RESEARCH ETHICS.....	7
<i>Ownership, control, access, and possession of research processes and data</i>	7
<i>Fundamental values</i>	7
<i>Importance of Indigenous know-how</i>	8
PROPOSED APPROACHES FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN THE NORTH.....	8
<i>The importance of engaging</i>	8
Interpersonal skills in northern settings.....	9
<i>Starting points</i>	9
<i>Methodology</i>	10
<i>Research results</i>	11
RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION.....	11
REFERENCES	12
APPENDIX I – SPECIFIC AND SHARED RESEARCH NEEDS	15
<i>Explanation of the flower</i>	15

Position Statement

The Institut nordique du Québec (INQ) First Peoples Working Group (FPWG) acknowledges that:

- Indigenous Peoples possess a wealth of unique traditional and land-based knowledge;
- Indigenous Peoples have the right and duty to control and protect their cultural, material, and immaterial heritage;
- Research conducted in the North must comply with the values and social skills of Indigenous peoples, and with their dignity and privacy;
- Research conducted in the North must address the needs and priorities identified by Indigenous Peoples;
- Research projects in the North must be co-designed and co-produced by Indigenous Peoples and researchers.

FPWG undertakes to:

- Propose guidelines that will serve as a tool for researchers and students associated with the INQ;
- Consult Indigenous Peoples in the North in order to define their needs and research priorities;
- Promote harmonious relations between Indigenous Peoples in the North and the INQ's research teams.

INQ First Peoples Working Group

The First Peoples Working Group (FPWG) consists of seven members, including four from the Cree, Innu, Inuit, and Naskapi nations. It is agreed that the interests of the Anicinape and Atikamekw will be taken into consideration in the FPWG's research.

The INQ's mandate is to "keep its partners in the vanguard of knowledge development and the application of that knowledge to the development of the North and the circumpolar world" (*INQ Profile*, 2016). To help the INQ meet its mandate, the FPWG has defined a number of precise objectives, namely, 1) to develop a guide for good practices in northern research, 2) to organize a forum to identify the research needs of Indigenous Peoples, and 3) to draw up a list of Indigenous Peoples' research needs (specific and shared), which will serve as the cornerstone for future INQ research. This discussion paper addresses Objective #1.

Message from FPWG to researchers and students

In the view of FPWG members, it is essential that Indigenous Peoples in the North be not only consulted during research, but that they also be involved in discussions and decision making prior to such research. Their knowledge must be sufficiently taken into consideration by researchers and students. Indigenous Peoples have centuries-old knowledge, and are open to sharing it through fair and equitable accords and agreements that ensure the protection of their unique heritage of knowledge. However, as they have pointed out, this knowledge belongs to them, as do decisions regarding which knowledge they choose to share and how it will be shared (Martin, 2013).

The research guidelines presented herein are aimed at researchers and students associated with the INQ, however they can also serve as a good practices guide for any researcher interested in the North, in Canada and elsewhere. In other words, it is a reference document for northern research that constitutes one of the many research tools available for consultation.

Introduction

The FPWG's initiative to draft guidelines for the Institut nordique du Québec is in keeping with ongoing efforts to decolonize research. Since the 1960s, Indigenous Peoples worldwide have been calling for the protection of their intellectual property rights and for researchers to adopt practices that incorporate a greater appreciation for ethics (Nagy, 2011; Smith, 2012). For over 20 years, Indigenous initiatives in Canada have emerged in response to research needs expressed by Indigenous Peoples. This movement came about in the wake of the publication of the 1996 *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* report, which includes a section on research principles.

In Canada, major advances have been made to lay the groundwork so that scientific research is governed by research protocols, guidelines, agreements, accords, and respectful practices¹. The mission FPWG is working to fulfill is closely tied to this movement. It also reflects one of the goals of Canada's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, namely, to support and promote research by, for, and with Aboriginal Peoples (SSHRC, 2016). By drafting these guidelines, FPWG seeks to ensure that research in the North is conducted in a manner that is both respectful of Indigenous Peoples and of benefit to them.

From a research decolonization perspective, these guidelines are also part of a broader movement to democratize research in which the participation of Indigenous Peoples is essential. As noted by Schnarch in his work on research principles, "By regaining control of institutions and processes that impact them, communities build hope for a healthy future" (Schnarch, 2004: 94).

Methodology

Prior to the drafting of this discussion paper, a review was conducted of the literature dealing with Indigenous and Northern research, and an in-depth analysis was done on the documents produced by various Indigenous bodies.

For the sake of consistency with the principles of co-construction of knowledge with Indigenous Peoples (Lévesque, 2009), a draft of this paper was presented at the Forum on Research Needs in the North organized by the FPWG in March 2017. The forum provided an opportunity to consult Indigenous Peoples concerned and to validate the content of the guidelines. The discussion paper will also be submitted for consultation online. The final version of the paper will be available in English and French.

¹These include the creation, in 1998, of the principles of ownership, control, access, and possession of research processes and data (OCAP™); the Amauti intellectual property project launched in 2002 by the Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association; the *Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the North*, drafted in 2003 by the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies; the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS)* of 1998, 2010, and 2014; and the *First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Research Protocol* of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador of 2005 and 2014.

Research in the North

Research and Indigenous Peoples

For many years, research in an Indigenous context was carried out primarily by non-Indigenous researchers, who set the conditions for it. Historically, research was conducted in a colonial manner, without the collaboration of the peoples concerned, and without any validation or feedback on the results once the studies were complete. This explains why, in recent decades, Indigenous Peoples have criticized these methods, noting the lack of benefits for them (Gentelet, 2009). In fact, Canada's Indigenous Peoples, along with others, were pioneers when it came to establishing research ethics standards. As Nagy mentions (2011:7), "Thus in Canada it is now impossible for scientists to undertake research projects without the proper consultations, permissions, and collaborations with the communities involved." However, this Canadian approach has not been unanimously accepted. Some European researchers are against the adoption of an ethics charter specific to social science research in the Arctic (Martin, 2013). It is also worth mentioning that

[...] Researchers in some fields, notably in natural sciences, are not used to dealing with human beings, and do not know how to react when Indigenous Peoples tell them they were created as stewards of Mother Earth, and that as a result it is up to them to decide how research on the land, the animals, and the plants must be defined (Martin, 2013: 22).

The key focus in this context is on drafting, implementing, using, and institutionalizing research protocols in Indigenous ethics.

A number of Indigenous Peoples and organizations have developed research protocols² that help provide a framework for research in Indigenous settings and ensure compliance with research ethics standards. These tools address the concerns raised by Indigenous groups with regard to research conducted in their communities (ITK and NRI, 2006).

It is also essential to take into account the notion of "collective knowledge" (most often applicable in an Indigenous context), not solely that referred to as "individual knowledge," which is more often applied in a non-Indigenous context. In addition, in affirming that Inuit knowledge is being respected, it is not enough to simply write terms in Inuktitut (Armitage, 2011).

FPWG: Defining the North

Coming up with a definition of the North is a challenge. INQ defines the North (or rather, the Norths) in relation to the 49th parallel. Four Indigenous nations live in these northern regions, an area of over 1.2 million km², or 72% of Quebec's total land mass. This definition reflects that of the Government of

² See *Guidelines for Research in the Nunavik Region* (2012) by the Makivik Corporation, *Guidelines for Research with Aboriginal Women* (2012) by Quebec Native Women Association Inc., *Negotiating Research Relationships with Inuit Communities: A Guide for Researchers* (2006) by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and Nunavut Research Institute, *Ethical Principles for the Conduct of Research in the North* by the Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies (2003), and the *First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Research Protocol* of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (2014). On the international front, see *Values and Ethics: Guidelines for Ethical Conduct in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Research* (2003), *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australian Indigenous Studies* (2012), *Guidelines for Researchers on Health Research Involving Maori* (2010), and *Ethical Guidelines for Sami Research: the Issue that Disappeared from the Norwegian Sami Parliament's Agenda?* (2015).

Quebec (Société du Plan Nord, <https://plannord.gouv.qc.ca/en/territory>, page consulted February 9, 2017).

But government and institutional definitions of the North do not necessarily coincide with those of the Indigenous Peoples, for whom the territory is shared among different nations, with no firm political or administrative boundaries. As a result, decolonizing research requires that considerable thought be given to the notions of territorial overlap and traditional territory (Asselin, 2011). FPWG therefore suggests that in drafting these guidelines, there be a reflection on defining the North, and that researchers establish, together with the Indigenous Peoples concerned, a common definition of the territory where the research is to be conducted.

Principles of Research Ethics

Ownership, control, access, and possession of research processes and data

The principles of ownership, control, access, and possession of research processes and data (OCAP™)—including results—must be considered the very basis of research with Indigenous Peoples (SSHRC, NSERC, and CIHR, 2010 and 2015). *The First Nations of Quebec and Labrador Research Protocol* (AFNQL, 2014) defines in detail these four principles, and aids researchers by posing clear questions that enable them to check whether these principles are being respected.

Fundamental values

Certain fundamental values rooted in Indigenous cultures must be taken into consideration in the research process. Researchers, students, and organizations must demonstrate their commitment to these values in their work (National Health & Medical Research Council, 2003). These values are respect, equity, reciprocity, equality, and transparency.

For AFNQL, "[...] **respect** is more in the lines of acknowledgement and appreciation of differences [...]" (2014: 5). Respect must continue throughout the research process, from the initial stages of contact to the relationship between the communities and the researcher, and the dissemination of results. Another specific aspect must also be considered, i.e., respect for the land and the environment, a value inherent in northern traditions (Government of Yukon, Government of Northwest Territories, and Government of Nunavut, 2014).

Equity is the ability to give everyone what they deserve. In other words, this value refers to the sharing of knowledge, power, benefits, and spinoffs generated by research with the members of the community.

Reciprocity refers to the mutual relationship between the research team and the Indigenous community, one in which each party gives as much as they receive. Where there is reciprocity, there is **equality** between the different actors involved in the research process. This equality also applies to know-how and knowledge. In other words, Indigenous and Western knowledge is equivalent and complementary (Lertzman 2006; Berkes, 2009, 2012).

Transparency is reflected in the commitment to bring to light the full reality. Indigenous communities expect researchers to disseminate information regarding their research in an accurate, clear, and comprehensive manner.

In short, what needs to be prioritized and promoted is the importance of building a relationship of trust among researchers, students, organizations, and the Indigenous communities. This relationship of trust is forged by upholding fundamental values throughout the research process (Lévesque, 2009). For an illustration of the interrelation of fundamental values and principles of research, we recommend consulting the concept map of the *Research Protocol of the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador* (AFNQL, 2014). The document *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (2014) also includes a chapter on ethics in Indigenous research (Chapter 9) covering the values of respect, well-being, and justice that were presented and discussed with Indigenous groups during scientific activities on the topic (Asselin and Basile, 2012).

Importance of Indigenous know-how

Indigenous Peoples are a repository of unique, rich, centuries-old expertise. While some of this knowledge may be considered sensitive, it is important to ensure its protection and to transfer it to the next generation³. This knowledge and know-how must be respected and taken into account during research, and considered as part of a vast, organized system of knowledge. For example, Indigenous knowledge of environmental conditions and socio-economic realities is an important source of insight for research (ITK and NRI, 2006: 5). The knowledge held by Indigenous women merits special attention due to its unique and specific nature (QNSA, 2012; Desbiens 2010; Basile, 2017).

As set out in *A Pan-Northern Approach to Science* (Government of Yukon, 2016: 20), "traditional and local knowledge is essential to our understanding the North." It is therefore important to take it into account, alongside Western knowledge, at every stage of research. Indigenous knowledge helps not only to enrich research and knowledge about the North, it also aids in decision making in various spheres (environmental protection, governance, the safeguarding of northern cultures), while empowering Indigenous Peoples.

Proposed Approaches for Conducting Research in the North

The importance of engaging

Undertaking research in the North is all about working in close cooperation with the communities concerned, at every stage of the research project. Continuous follow-up is key throughout the process. A number of documents highlight these two aspects. In the *Cree Regional Conservation Strategy* (2015), a document produced by the Cree Nation Government, it is clearly stated that all research must involve the full participation of the Cree. This same recommendation is also set out in Makivik Corporation's *Guidelines for Research in the Nunavik Region* (2012). Lastly the *Research Protocol of the First Nations of Quebec and Labrador* (AFNQL, 2014) stresses the importance for First Nations to actively participate and collaborate in all the steps of the research process in their environment." (AFNQL, 2014: 14). In light of these examples, it is clear that both among the First Nations and the Inuit, this mutual engagement in research is essential, and is key to the success of such research projects.

³The transfer of this knowledge and know-how is an important topic in many communities worldwide—see Boucher (2005), Laurendeau (2011), and others. See also the work of the community of Mashteuiatsh and UNESCO with regard to local and Indigenous knowledge systems, particularly Indigenous education (Colomb, 2012).

Makivik Corporation (2012) recommends dividing research into different stages and providing feedback to the community at the end of each stage. This allows researchers and community members alike to see how the research is advancing and to make adjustments along the way. Flexibility is essential on the part of both sides.

Interpersonal skills in northern settings

A community-based approach can help researchers engage fully in their research environment. The goal of this approach is simply to get the "newcomer" to take the time to get to know people, to introduce themselves, and to show an interest in their situation, with a view to gaining a better understanding of their culture (Regroupement québécois des organismes pour le développement de l'employabilité, 2016: 47).

Researchers must adopt the appropriate attitude and keep in mind that they are "visitors" in northern Indigenous territory. Rather than imposing their own practices, they must be receptive to those of the communities. It is important to take the time to forge ties with the community and respect the cyclical pace of life of Indigenous cultures (Regroupement québécois des organismes pour le développement de l'employabilité, 2016: 55).

Honesty, openness, patience, a willingness to listen, and humility are attitudes that researchers are encouraged to develop and put into practice when seeking to engage with an Indigenous community to conduct research (ITK and NRI, 2006: 7).

Starting points

Initial contact is a crucial stage that researchers are advised to prepare for carefully. Before making any contact, it is essential that researchers conduct a review of the scientific literature on the research topic (including that produced by Indigenous organizations) and perhaps even take an introductory course on Indigenous culture. This will allow them to identify where their topic fits in the existing corpus. It is also an indication of the researcher's seriousness (Makivik Corporation, 2012). The literature review should also take into account any existing research protocols within the Indigenous nation in question and will help the researcher to develop a strategy for implementing such protocols. Researchers should also be aware that the large majority of literature comes from the non-Indigenous scientific community, which in itself reflects a bias against Indigenous knowledge. A literature review is therefore the first scientific step, however it needs to be carried out in conjunction with the study of Indigenous knowledge and information.

In addition to reviewing the literature, an important part of preparing this initial contact involves describing the project and various research methodologies (Makivik Corporation, 2012: 25). This will help situate the researcher's topic of research and intentions. When researchers contact the local government, band council, municipality, or community organization, they must show an openness and willingness to co-construct the most suitable methodology for the context, and demonstrate that they have gathered knowledge during their preliminary research. All bachelor's, master's, and PhD students from universities around the world must be accompanied by their research supervisor (or co-supervisor) during the first meeting(s) with the concerned Indigenous authorities.

Once these initial stages are complete, researchers must validate their research protocol with their research partners and submit it for analysis to a research ethics board (REB).

A research ethics board is an authority created to assess the acceptability of research projects submitted to it. It is composed of individuals with various fields of expertise (traditional ecological knowledge, empowerment skills, and know-how; academic and scientific knowledge; local, community, and political representatives; and any other individual with relevant expertise in a First Nations context). (AFNQL, 2014: 32)

REBs are common in university settings, and certain Indigenous organizations also have a similar structure, e.g., the First Nations Information Governance Centre. It is therefore up to researchers to be mindful of the existing authorities in the territory in question, while complying with the regulatory requirements of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS 2).

Methodology

Researchers, in cooperation with Indigenous partners, must ensure they "choose a research methodology that respects the conditions prescribed by the Aboriginal community, taking into account the values and knowledge of Aboriginal women" (Quebec Native Women Association, 2012: 9). For more on this topic see Asselin and Basile (2012); Blangy, McGinley, and Harvey Lemelin (2010); and Smith (1999 and 2012), who propose a methodological approach in this regard. The selected methodology must then be presented to the community.

While there are various existing research methodologies, there is no single prevailing model. However, the Assembly of First Nations of Quebec and Labrador (AFNQL, 2014) and the Quebec Native Women's Association (QNWA, 2012, 2016) both recommend participatory action research (PAR), the preferred methodology in Indigenous research due its collaborative approach. PAR is defined as a co-constructivist approach based on partnership between Indigenous Peoples and researchers.

The participatory action research approach is built around knowledge sharing and mobilization, shared responsibility for the research project, and community engagement (Anadon, 2007). The goal of PAR is to empower communities by mobilizing and using their own expertise. This process is carried out with the involvement and collaboration of all stakeholders (Reason and Bradbury, 2007) (Blangy, McGinley, and Harvey Lemelin, 2010: 72).

Once the data is collected and analyzed, the interpretation of the results must be validated with the community in question. As Schnarch explains, "[as] with academic review, a First Nations review process is generally intended to ensure quality of the work, its relevance, and the appropriateness of interpretation. The review should be viewed as an opportunity rather than a threat. The definition of peer needs to be broadened" (2004: 93). This review can be carried out in several different ways. In all cases, it is important to ensure that the communication methods used by the researcher are appropriate and compatible with the community or organization (language, visual tools, written documents, popularization, etc.).

Research results

For too long, Indigenous communities have opened their doors to researchers without being able to take part in their research projects or receive any benefits once the work is complete (Gentelet, 2009; ITK and NRI, 2006). Today, where a collaborative approach is used, research results must be validated by the communities concerned, and must also benefit these communities.

The results must be disseminated in an appropriate manner for a northern community. In other words, the researchers must consider the various methods of communication used by Indigenous communities. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami and the Nunavut Research Institute (2006) set out a number of different methods, stressing the importance of developing a communication strategy to disseminate results, for example, by way of local or regional radio shows; the creation of posters, brochures, or newspaper inserts; the use of social media; the publication of project summaries in accessible language; and others.

Recommendations and Conclusion

It is important that researchers collaborate closely with people in the community and that they ensure their proposed research is relevant and has significant benefits for them. There are a number of ways researchers can promote harmonious collaboration with Indigenous communities:

- Purchase goods and services locally, where possible, when in the North;
- Develop the employability of the Indigenous Peoples by hiring and training local resources;
- Minimize your ecological footprint by leaving no waste behind and no equipment that cannot be used by the community members;
- Act as a role model for the communities' young people by sharing not only your knowledge, but also your career path as a researcher;
- Ensure the transfer of skills between researchers and Indigenous Peoples;
- Implement permanent tools that are of benefit to the communities.

These recommendations reflect INQ's sustainable development values and address the requests and needs of the Indigenous Peoples.

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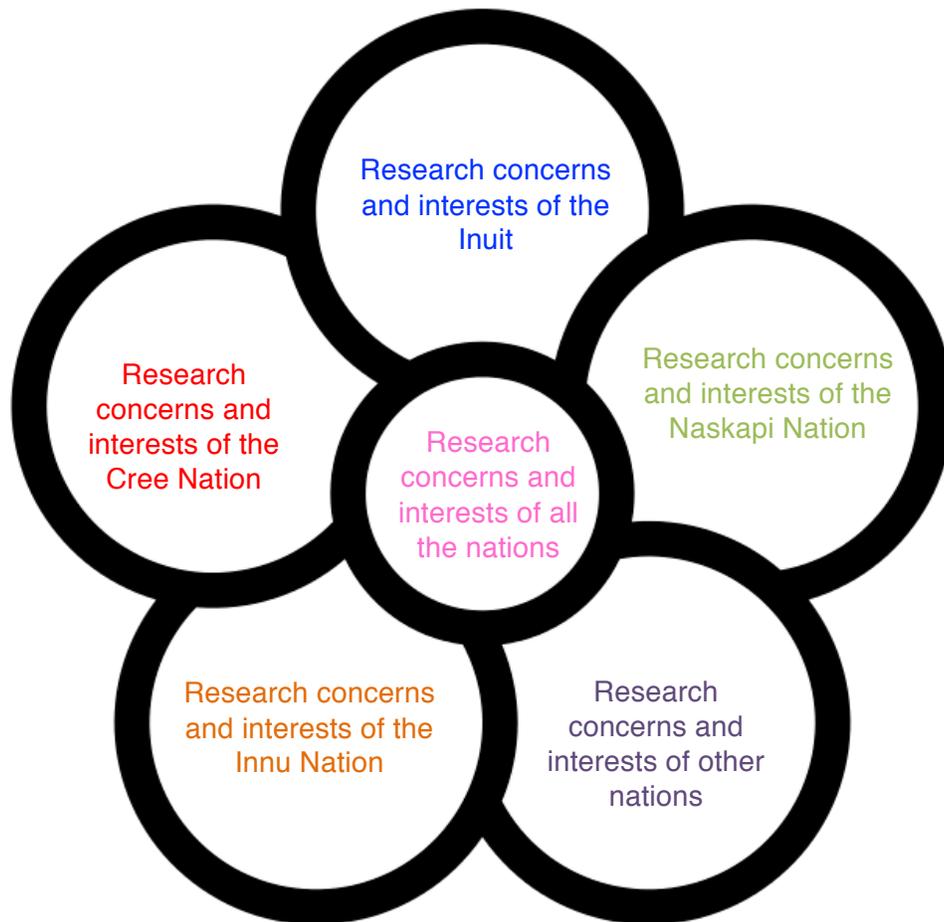
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Appendix I – Specific and Shared Research Needs



Explanation of the flower

The choice of a flower to illustrate the diversity and interconnection of the specific and shared research needs of Indigenous Peoples symbolizes the circle and the holistic vision characterized by the nations. The flower also represents a cultural symbol of Indigenous Peoples that is often found on various handicrafts (e.g., beading on moccasins and clothing) made by women. The style of flower used by these artisans reflects their respective territories and can often indicate their origin and the people and region to which they belong.