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# “The Giant Puzzle”: Indigenous Research Ethics and Protocol

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# **“The Giant Puzzle”: Indigenous Research Ethics and Protocol**

University of Calgary  
Teaching and Learning Centre

**1st Annual Collaborating for Learning  
Conference  
(May 15-16, 2013)**

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# Three perspectives weave together in research ethics and protocol

Academia

Indigenous  
Communities



Self

# Academia

- University of Calgary has (2 REB):
  - Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB)
  - Conjoint Health Research Ethics Board (CHREB)
- Human participants, animals, and biohazards
- Forms / Certification
- Which research ethics form do you need?



## ***Academia ...***

*Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2). (Dec. 2010)*

### Canadian federal funding agencies:

- Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
- Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC)
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)



# TCPS 2 - Core Principles

Respect for Persons

Concern for Welfare

Justice

How do these principles apply to ethics and protocol for Academia, Indigenous Communities, and the Self?

# TCPS2 (2010) CORE Tutorial

- RESEARCH SERVICES, Institutional Research Information Services Solution (IRISS), <http://www.ucalgary.ca/iriss/>
- Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 **Course On Research Ethics (CORE)** - Ethical conduct for research involving humans, [http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/ethics/CORE\\_Tutorial](http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/ethics/CORE_Tutorial)
- All graduate students must complete the online tutorial to receive a “Certificate of Review” - this is attached to a final thesis or dissertation
- Graduate students, staff and faculty apply to the Research Ethics Office in Research Services
- “Undergraduates see Ethics Chair of their department or faculty”  
<http://www.ucalgary.ca/research/files>

## TCPS 2 (2010)

Chapter 9 “Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada” (pp. 105-133).

There are 22 Articles in this chapter that highlight some scenarios that researcher(s) can face.

I.e. **Article 9.15** Recognition of the Elders and Other Knowledge Holders (TCPS 2, 2010, p. 126)

What does reciprocity mean in Aboriginal communities?

# Indigenous Communities

Wilson, Shawn. (2008). *Research is Ceremony*.

- “Relationality” (chap. 5)
- “Relational accountability” (chap. 6)

**Cosmos**

**Ideas**



**People**

**Environment / Land**

**What does “interconnectedness” have to do with conducting ethical research?**



# Indigenous Ethics & Protocol

Marlene Brant Castellano (2004). “Ethics of Aboriginal Research.”

- **Ethics** refers to rules of conduct that express and reinforce important social and cultural values of a society.
- **Protocol** set the parameters of sacred knowledge in what can be shared or kept private within a community particularly on the topic of ceremonial practices.
- **8 Principles** that guide the development of appropriate ethical regimes.

# Indigenous community-based research ethics & protocol

Michell, Herman. (2009). “Gathering berries...”

- Use of metaphor as a research methodology
- A Cree cultural worldview, value system, experiential learning (*position of place*) frames the research

1) Protocol – tobacco offering to Mother Earth – prayers, gratitude

2) Ethics – knowledge (geographical, plant life cycle, observation, participatory, diversity of berries/people, life cycle (birth to death), relationship building, analysis-selecting ripe berries—develop “*berry picking consciousness*,” knowledge is held within stories...)

3) How humans interact with the natural world affects the ethics of the Self, Indigenous Communities, and Academia



A Blueberry Inn  
([www.ablueberryinn.com](http://www.ablueberryinn.com))

“The only difference between human beings and four legged and plants is the shadow they cast” (Wilson, 2008, p. 87).

# Self

- Research is ...
  - an ethical responsibility
  - a historical legacy
  - personal – our spirit gets involved
  - a question of publish or perish??? ... define value?

How does a person develop an ‘ethical backbone?’

*reciprocity* integrity genuine HEART

spiritual, moral, and ethical responsibility

*“If research doesn’t change you as a person, then you aren’t doing it right” (Wilson, 2008, p. 83).*

# In contemplation

In the past, Indigenous Peoples were studied from a Eurocentric anthropological perspective that sought to “Other” them; this left a deep and lasting legacy of mistrust towards researchers.

Research ‘through imperial eyes’ describes an approach, which assumes that Western ideas about the most fundamental things are the only ideas possible to hold, certainly the only rational ideas, and the only ideas, which can make sense of the world, of reality, of social life and of human beings (Smith, 1999, p. 56).

Research on and for Indigenous Peoples is repositioned today as research with and by Indigenous Peoples.

**Today, a braid of sweetgrass can be used as a metaphor to represent a weave of research ethics and protocol of Academia, Indigenous Communities, and the Self based in transparency, reciprocal responsibility, and wisdom.**

## Tailor “the giant puzzle” collaborative activity to any course or learning project

- Have students create their own puzzle - let them organize the puzzle shapes - natural leaders will surface on their own
- “Cut out” pieces can represent what is not visible, silent voices of women, children, elderly, literacy issues, the spirit world, deeply held beliefs
- Use various coloured bristol boards – have more puzzle pieces than colours – more than one colour per piece can represent diversity of ideas, cultures, ways of knowing - use markers and crayons - add collages - be creative
- This activity builds capacity, relationship, inquiry and collaborative skills
- Groups work on separate puzzle pieces (they highlight main points of academic reading) - when reassembling the puzzle, a holistic view emerges – students see how individual pieces relate to a larger picture
- Give students 15 minutes at the beginning of each class to work on their puzzle piece. On the day of reassembling the puzzle (6th class), groups “present” their critical reflections and analysis of the reading – fellow classmates learn from their peers
- The benefits of this activity are endless - having fun is essential!

# References

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## Endnote

- The term "Aboriginal" refers to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples of Canada as recognized in the Canadian Constitution Act of 1982.
- The term "Indigenous" is used in a global sense of original peoples of a land.