



Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council's RESEARCH ETHICS

The definitions for “traditional knowledge” and “local knowledge” that we refer to are in accordance with those outline by Noor Jonathan:

Traditional knowledge (TK) refers to the cumulative and transmitted knowledge, experience, and wisdom of human communities with a long-term attachment to place. Some researchers and Indigenous practitioners prefer the term ‘Indigenous science’ because it emphasizes the dynamic nature of these knowledge systems, the systematic nature of observations they generate, and the fact that science is not a uniquely Western paradigm. In contrast, local knowledge (LK) refers to the knowledge of the local residents of a community, often the users of local resources, primarily involves knowledge of local species and dynamics, and is not necessarily embedded within an explicit belief system.

In other words, TK has withstood the test of time. LK is based primarily on more recent observations and experiences.

In our research we, the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Watershed Council, must:

- Respect and protect the local community and its knowledge. Research requires relational accountability between humans, the land and ideas. According to indigenous scholar Shawn Wilson, relational accountability is protected in four ways: “The first is through how we go about choosing the topics we research. The second is in the methods that we use to ‘collect our data’ or build relationships. The third is the way in which we analyze what we are learning. Finally, we maintain relational accountability in the way in which we present the outcomes of the research” (107).
- Facilitate connections between TK, LK and other knowledge forms (including that of the researcher)—recognizing that all parties will enter into the research process with their own subjectivity and bias.
- Receive informed consent before using TK and LK. Communities must be fully informed about all aspects of the research and the manner in which their knowledge will be used before we can request use of their knowledge.
- Make all human research subjects be and feel safe.

The research we undertake must:

- Not be done *on* but *by* or *with* Indigenous people. All proposed projects and research topics should be developed using the input of the local community.
- Establish whether or not research subjects (both people and place) are to remain anonymous or honored by name, recognizing that TK and LK are inherently place and people based.
- Benefit the community and the expected benefits should be clearly stated before research begins. Additionally, any foreseeable negative impacts should be presented ahead of time.

Ultimately, we act under the belief that “Collaborative projects are likely to be more successful if they are context specific, flexible, and adaptive, and if they take into consideration local needs, benefits, motivation, and capacity to engage.” (Johnson et al. 2013).

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