

University of Regina – Research Ethics Board

Indigenous Research Toolkit

2026

Overview:

The University of Regina’s Research Ethics Board’s Indigenous toolkit is designed to support research involving Indigenous (First Nations, Inuit, and Métis) Peoples and communities, in order to:

1. Prioritize First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples and communities in leading their research agendas. It also aims to support research involving non-Status Indigenous peoples.
2. Promote cultural safety and appropriate engagement by researchers working with Indigenous Peoples in meaningful ways to ensure respectful relations are established.
3. Add value to research through the use of culturally-relevant Indigenous theoretical methods and conceptual frameworks, and inclusion of culturally-appropriate research protocols and ceremonies.
4. Promote equity and development of trainees, researchers and knowledge users who are of Indigenous ancestry.

Important Note: This toolkit supplements, but does not replace, community-specific research protocols and agreements. Community direction should prevail where there is a discrepancy between this toolkit and community protocols.

How do I, as a researcher, use this toolkit:

Who should use it: Faculty researchers, student researchers, community partners, and REB reviewers.

When should I use it: At the idea stage (before funding applications), during pre-submission preparation, and throughout the research lifecycle

Key principle: Engage early, engage respectfully, and follow community direction at every stage. Ensure you understand how your work can impact communities and ensure you are doing no harm. At the very least, TCPS 2, Chapter 1, the benefits balance risk and harm.

Flow: Review definitions and distinct peoples → Identify which communities to pre-engage (Steps 1-3) → Review examples and engagement models → Complete pre-REB checklist → Submit to REB with documentation.

Why must all researchers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, follow these procedures and steps when engaging with Indigenous communities?

Where your project is likely to affect the welfare of Indigenous peoples or an Indigenous community that participants belong to, pre-engagement with community is an important step. Community pre-engagement will vary depending on your research project or scope. In some cases, you may need to pre-engage with a specific nation, nations, or governing body (i.e: Cree, Dakota, Saulteaux First Nation, or Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations). In other projects, participants may be part of many nations or specific community organizations, and then you may need to pre-engage with those organizations, this could include an Elders' Council, community-based leaders, etc..

Ethical relationship building is the foundational process of practicing culturally appropriate research with Indigenous Peoples, as emphasized in TCPS 2, Chapter 9. Ethically meaningful relationships are achieved when the research environment is mentally, spiritually, emotionally, and physically considerate.

Researchers' ongoing development should include examining how systemic and personal biases, authority, privilege, and territorial history influence research relationships, with a sustained commitment to building trust with Indigenous Peoples and communities impacted by the research. Understanding the social, political, and historical contexts that create power imbalances, and strengthening cultural competencies (including cultural humility, competence, sensitivity, and awareness), supports researchers in determining appropriate research policies, programs, models, and projects with the Indigenous Peoples and communities the study is intended to benefit.

Ethical research relationships strive for equitable practices by acknowledging distinct identities, beliefs, and cultural needs. As researchers we do this to ensure participants feel safe, research is based on trust and respect, and participants/communities are meaningfully involved in research-related decision-making, consistent with the spirit of TCPS 2, Chapter 9.

Pre-REB Submission Checklist:

Prior to submitting your REB application, review the following requirements. These align with TCPS2 Chapter 9 (2022).

Relationships and Readiness:

- The research team has completed training on ethical research practices and building relationships with Indigenous participants and communities by completing TCPS2. The team may also have CORE, BRICC, IRLET, OCAP®, RIRRR, Indigenous-specific modules).
- The research team has provided evidence of knowledge to support research relationship building practices to prepare the team for ethical involvement with Indigenous Peoples. These include letters of support etc.
- The research team understands distinct protocols for engaging with the specific Indigenous communities and participants impacted by the research project. How will this information be acquired?

Community Authority and Support:

- Which distinct Indigenous group and person/community will your research impact/involve? (First Nations, Inuit, Métis; on-reserve, Inuit Nunangat, Métis settlement, urban/rural off-reserve)
- Describe how you have identified appropriate leaders/organizations for this specific Nation, Inuit region, Métis government, or urban Indigenous community.
- Please note when working with urban participant pools that may not belong to a single Indigenous community, researchers may consider approaching community organizations such as local Friendship Centers or other local Indigenous Community groups.
- Support from community leadership is required. How will this research project acquire initial support and how will it acquire ongoing support?
- Document which communities you pre-engaged, why these were the right communities, and what form that pre-engagement took (TCPS2 Article 9.10).

Capacity and Benefit:

- Does this research project have developmental funds to support ethical research relationship building practices (i.e., pay for honorariums for Knowledge Holders, travel costs for community meetings, capacity-building for community partners)?
- The project includes provisions for community benefit, capacity building, and knowledge transfer (e.g., training for community members, co-authorship, employment, data governance agreements)

Data and Knowledge Governance:

- ❑ Describe how you will respect community data sovereignty and follow principles such as OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, Possession) or similar distinction-based frameworks identified by communities.
- ❑ Attach any community protocol documents, research codes, or agreements, and explain how the project aligns with them.

Consent and Communication:

- ❑ No information can be documented during the relationship building phase, you will require an approved REB application first.
- ❑ Describe consent processes that respect community protocols and individual participant needs

Support for Indigenous Communities

What Communities Can Ask For:

Indigenous communities have the right to set conditions for research conducted with their members. Communities may request:

- Formal research agreements specifying roles, responsibilities, and expectations
- Data governance terms, including ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP or similar)
- Co-authorship and meaningful participation in knowledge dissemination
- Capacity building and training for community members
- Funding for community time, expertise, and participation
- Protection of sacred, ceremonial, or sensitive knowledge
- The right to review findings before publication
- The right to decline participation or withdraw support at any stage
- The right to refuse certain knowledge mobilization outputs

Questions Communities May Pose to Researchers:

- Who will benefit from this research?
- How will the research benefit our community specifically?
- How will knowledge and data be protected?
- Who will own the data and research findings?
- Will community members be trained or employed in the research?
- What does the long-term relationship look like after the project ends?
- How will you ensure our protocols and cultural practices are respected?

- What happens if we disagree with how the research is being conducted?

International Research with Indigenous Communities:

For research conducted outside Canada with Indigenous communities or participants:

- Researchers must follow country-specific local requirements for conducting research with Indigenous communities
- Familiarize yourself with local customs, protocols, and forms of authority and representation (including customary leaders, councils, and collectives)
- Obtain required local ethics approvals (Institutional Review Boards, Ethics Committees, or National review bodies as applicable)
- Provide evidence to the U of R REB that local ethics review requirements will be followed (TCPS2 Article 8.3)
- Recognize that not all Indigenous communities are recognized by states in the same way; attend to local forms of legitimate authority
- If working with communities lacking formal state recognition, describe in your REB application how you identified legitimate community authorities and protocols
- Engagement may take significant time; consider local contexts and requirements in early planning phases

When might I not need to engage with community?

In some limited situations, researchers may not need to engage with an Indigenous community. This may be the case where an Indigenous participant or participants role is not based on identity or connections to a specific community or collective interest. For example, Indigenous participants may be part of a low-risk, institution-based study where Indigenous participants are part of a larger or more diverse sample of participants. In addition, Indigenous participants could be part of a larger project that looks specifically at their work or role and does not include Indigeneity as part of the frame.

In these cases, the framing of the research is particularly important. If at any time the research will be framed and/or shared as Indigenous research, the researchers should pause and consider if the work needs community engagement. In these cases, researchers should carefully assess whether the project might still affect the welfare, rights, or representation of an identifiable Indigenous community, and if so, follow TCPS 2 Chapter 9 expectations for community engagement.

What if a community requests to withdraw completely?

Researchers should be prepared for the possibility that like research participants, communities may wish to withdraw from a study. Ensure you have a plan to pivot should this happen.

Need Additional Support?

If you require additional guidance before REB submission, please review the directions above and include relevant information within the body of the REB submission once ready for submission.

If the researcher requires additional support, please review and respond to each requirement listed above within the body of an email and include:

- Project Title
- Principal Investigator
- Co-Investigator(s)
- Student(s) and Supervisor (only for student projects)
- Project proposal (if available)

Email: research.ethics@uregina.ca

The REB is here to support you in conducting ethical, respectful, and meaningful research with Indigenous Peoples and communities.