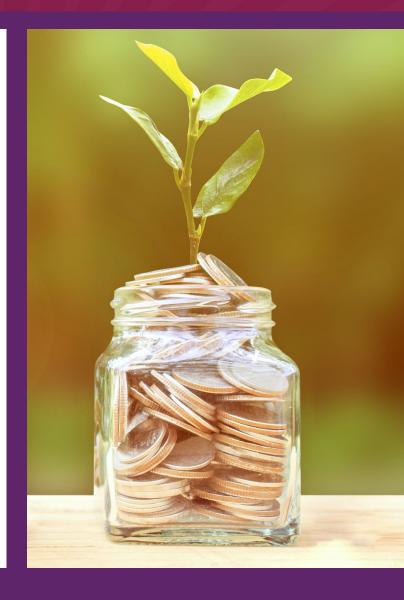# FUNDING RESEARCH IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

KEY POINTS AND TAKEAWAYS:

- Tribal parity and trusted research partnerships are essential throughout the entire research process, from conception to dissemination of outcomes.[1]

- Research must recognize tribal sovereignty and governance,[2] as well as history, place, and culture.[3]

- Community-based participatory research that authentically engages the community can identify and prevent potential adverse outcomes of research.[4]

- Research projects should be mutually beneficial to the tribal community and the researcher.[5]

- Funding effective research projects in tribal communities that develop thoughtful and equal partnerships "requires more time and funding than usual researcher-driven initiatives."[6]

Research can inform policy and tribally-driven decisions that impact health equity, healthy food access, and traditional food systems. However, adverse outcomes can occur if research does not consider cultural knowledge, engage the tribal community, or authentically establish transparent and equal partnerships with tribes throughout the entirety of the research process. When funding research in American Indian and Alaska Native communities, it is important to know how to identify a successful research project that is based on trusted partnerships, community engagement, and consent that recognizes the sovereignty of tribal nations.

> *"GOVERNANCE AS STEWARDSHIP ENHANCES PROTECTION OF THE COMMUNITY, HELPS TO FOSTER RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS AND APPROPRIATE ACCESS TO AND APPROVAL OF RESEARCH BY COMMUNITY BODIES, ENSURES BENEFIT FOR THE COMMUNITY, PROVIDES LEGITIMACY OF THE RESEARCH, SHARES RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RESEARCH, PROVIDES COMMUNITY CONTROL, AND BUILDS RESEARCH CAPACITY IN COMMUNITIES."*[7]

Strong research partnerships begin with an understanding of context within which the research is taking place, particularly with regard to "culture, sovereignty, and experience."[8] Tribal communities are diverse; there is not a homogeneous approach to conducting research in tribal communities.[9] Overall, however, community-engaged research project should be rooted in a community's values.[10] Those values can be built upon the history of the community, including their previous relationships with researchers.[11] In cases where research has a negative connotation within a tribal community, it may be due to mistrust or consequences from historically unethical research practices.[12] Such was the case for the Havasupai "Diabetes Project" in 1989, during which Havasupai tribal members participated in a study by providing blood samples under consents that they would be used for diabetes research.[13] Violations of trust occurred when the researchers conducted studies on the samples outside of the consent provided by the tribal members to look for indications of schizophrenia, inbreeding, and population migration theories.[14]

It is critical for researchers to establish an agreement of protection of tribal information,[15] including cultural knowledge.[16] Indigenous data sovereignty is "the right of Native nations to govern the collection, ownership, and application of its own data."[17] Knowledge sharing and protecting Indigenous knowledge is unique within tribal communities, in that knowledge keepers are at times the only stewards of traditional information.[18] As such, researchers can inadvertently ask inappropriate questions as it relates to sacred knowledge.[19]

Building trust correlates with investment of time. Patience and understanding are imperative with Native-and non-Native researchers alike.[20] Research that makes the biggest impact for American Indian and Alaska Native people goes beyond publication; it serves the whole. When funding research in tribal communities, first ask, how does this research benefit the community to help inform short and long-term tribally-driven solutions to improve community health, build capacity, and revitalize culture?[21]

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- **'Walk Softly and Listen Carefully':** Building Research Relationships with Tribal Communities

- **RED Talks:** Tribal Research Partnerships

  - *RED Talks are a series of video vignettes that share lessons learned from tribal-academic research partnerships. Some of the topics addressed in the video interviews include: Indigenous Research as Storytelling; The Role of Partnerships; Data Sharing among American Indians; A Model for Tribal Academic Advancement and Building Research Capacity*

- **Conducting Research with Tribal Communities:** Sovereignty, Ethics, and Data-Sharing Issues

- **Enhancing Stewardship of Community-Engaged Research Through Governance**

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2. Ibid.

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4. Anna Harding, Barbara Harper, Dave Stone, Catherine O'Neill, Patricia Berger, Stuart Harris, Jamie Donatuto. (2012) Conducting research with tribal communities: sovereignty, ethics, and data-sharing issues. Environ Health Perspect. Jan; 120(1): 6–10. Published online 2011 Sep 2. doi: 10.1289/ehp.1103904

5. NCAI, MSU (2012) Walk softly and listen carefully': Building research relationships with tribal communities.

6. Ibid.

7. John G. Oetzel, PhD, MPH, Malia Villegas, EdD, Heather Zenone, JD, Emily R. White Hat, JD, Nina Wallerstein, DrPH, and Bonnie Duran, DrPH (2015). Enhancing Stewardship of Community-Engaged Research Through Governance. American Journal of Public Health. June 2015, Vol 105, No. 6.

8. NCAI, MSU (2012) Walk softly and listen carefully': Building research relationships with tribal communities.

9. Anna Harding, Barbara Harper, Dave Stone, Catherine O'Neill, Patricia Berger, Stuart Harris, Jamie Donatuto. (2012) Conducting research with tribal communities: sovereignty, ethics, and data-sharing issues.

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13. Pacheco CM, Daley SM, Brown T, et al. Moving forward: breaking the cycle of mistrust between American Indians and researchers. Am J Public Health. 2013;103(12):2152---2159.

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16. NCAI, MSU (2012) Walk softly and listen carefully': Building research relationships with tribal communities.

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18. NCAI, MSU (2012) Walk softly and listen carefully': Building research relationships with tribal communities.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

21. Oetzel, J. G., Villegas, M., Zenone, H., White Hat, E. R., Wallerstein, N., & Duran, B. (2015). Enhancing stewardship of community-engaged research through governance.

22. Anna Harding, Barbara Harper, Dave Stone, Catherine O'Neill, Patricia Berger, Stuart Harris, Jamie Donatuto Environ Health Perspect. 2012 Jan; 120(1): 6–10. Published online 2011 Sep 2. doi: 10.1289/ehp.1103904

23. Oetzel, J. G., Villegas, M., Zenone, H., White Hat, E. R., Wallerstein, N., & Duran, B. (2015). Enhancing stewardship of community-engaged research through governance. American Journal of Public Health, 105, 1161-1167.