

Summary and Actions: Indigenous Panel Presentations & Discussion

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Background

On January 23, 2019 at the GWF Operations Meeting, the new Indigenous-led projects presented 5-minute snapshots of their projects. Following the presentations, meeting attendees were organized into 10 groups for Breakout Discussions meant to elicit meaningful discussion around the Indigenization of GWF's research, working ethically with Indigenous communities, and fostering cultivation of Indigenous relationships and partnerships in research. This document summarizes the themes that emerged from those discussions and identifies potential next steps and actions for the GWF program.

Themes & Highlights

Reoccurring themes: Questions and ideas emerged around the following concepts: a need for a better understanding of what meaningful and ethical engagement looks like; reciprocity in research; establishment of lasting relationships; who, when, and how to do active reconciliation individually, per project, program-wide, and as institutions.

Strengthening Best Practices in Ethical, Inclusive, and Co-Creative Research

- GWF has an opportunity to set the bar on Co-Creative research with Indigenous communities through the evolution of their Indigenous Community Water Strategy.
- Indigenous partners operate on different timelines for various reasons (community engagement resulting in informed consent takes time.) There's a need to provide more space and time for GWF researchers to engage in learning and establishing best practices with Indigenous communities.
- Initiation of projects takes time; the most effective research questions for Indigenous communities comes from the communities themselves. How do non-academic community partners take the lead and initiate research projects when they're not tied to the academy?

Building Relationships & Trust

- There is hesitancy to engage with Indigenous communities due to lack of connections to those communities, distance, and lack of trust.
- There is a need to learn from one another to improve our understanding of each other's worldviews
- Relationship building with communities includes translation of worldviews and takes time and trust
- Desire for joint experiential learning and joint knowledge/science interfacing opportunities in the field

- Research shouldn't tax communities who are often overresearched with little going back to the community
- Active reconciliation needs to be determined by community partners and acted upon by academics

Potential Actions and Next Steps to be Considered

1. Strengthening Best Practices in Ethical, Inclusive, and Co-Creative Research

1. Indigenous community involvement in projects should provide meaningful and reciprocal participation, including capacity-building opportunities, co-authorship on publications, and independent initiation of research questions
2. Mandatory program-wide education on cultural competency and ethical engagement with Indigenous communities in research should be implemented with a strong focus on OCAP principles (webinars, cultural competency workshops, integration of Indigenous perspectives in program-wide meetings)
3. Recognition of Traditional Knowledge as data; data sharing agreements for Indigenous stakeholders should be determined by community (OCAP principles)
4. Academic institutes need to be adaptive and respond to the specific needs of doing science in FN communities (e.g., data sharing agreements; eligible costs may be different than for western science projects – invoicing vs direct cash payments to community members).

2. Relationship Building

1. Hire & train community members as HQP
2. Recognition of local knowledge keepers as HQP; Establishment of "Indigenous Knowledge Guardians" and "Community Navigators" for projects would result in trust building and assurance that data is being held the way the community intends
3. Joint fieldwork prioritizing Indigenous & Western science equally
4. Bi-directional translation of Indigenous & Western science through workshops will assist in the transmission and embodiment of worldviews and will broaden research questions, data analysis, and outcomes
5. Development of innovative funding models to transcend time constraints and to incorporate the worldviews of Indigenous communities and researchers (to include gifting, feasts, honoraria)
6. Sampling strategies in remote regions can transcend the distance issue in remote regions
7. Identification of how existing projects can link with Indigenous communities is essential
8. GWF presence at local and national Indigenous leadership gatherings, conferences, events to network and build a presence (AFN Water Symposium)

9. Connecting with Indigenous organizations for establishment of relationships
(Native Women's Association, Assembly of First Nations, Chiefs of Ontario)