By blindly following research conventions, researchers have unwittingly and unilaterally constructed the ‘other.’

Nathalie Piquemal (2000, 49)

Relevance, respect, relationships, and reciprocity are valued aspects of ethical practice in all social research. In research involving Indigenous Peoples, these qualities must be ensured as part of larger processes of decolonization and restorative social justice. Researchers engaged with Indigenous Peoples are being challenged to rethink the ethics that guide practice, and to conduct research through partnerships with Indigenous individuals, communities, and organizations. Partnerships provide opportunities for developing relationships within which to negotiate the values, conceptual frameworks, methodologies, and control of research, as well as for deciding issues of ownership and dissemination of knowledge. “Nothing about us without us” expresses the principle of participation around which considerations of ethical practice involving Indigenous peoples in Canada now pivot.

Globally, there has been a growing dialogue about principles and protocols to guide research involving Indigenous Peoples and other minoritized populations. In Canada, policies and principles have been articulated by many Indigenous communities and organizations, and by the three federal councils supporting science and engineering research (NSERC), health research (CIHR), and social sciences and humanities research (SSHRC). To keep step with these national and community-level discourses, investigators and universities need to become more informed about why ‘research’ has become a profanity in many Indigenous communities, as a result of the historical experiences of Indigenous people as ‘research subjects.’ Non-Indigenous scholars and ethics review boards need to develop their capacity to listen and respond constructively to calls from Indigenous representatives to redress the balance of power in research relationships, and to develop bi- and multi-lateral agreements governing the conduct of research in Indigenous communities. At the University of Victoria, Indigenous scholars played key roles in crafting Principles and Protocols for Conduct of Research Involving Indigenous Peoples. In the School of Child and Youth Care, research teams such as those in the Early Childhood Development Intercultural Partnerships have also demonstrated
new approaches to informed consent, protection of Indigenous knowledge, participatory methodologies, and dissemination of findings in ways that are accessible and approved by Indigenous communities.

While the number of Indigenous researchers is growing, most research about Indigenous people continues to be done by non-Indigenous investigators and students. Supporting the development of Indigenous research capacity and the inclusion of Indigenous students and community members on research teams must be a priority in research involving Indigenous people. A primary objective of the Early Childhood Development Intercultural Partnerships program is to support the development of Indigenous research capacity by involving Indigenous students, young scholars, advisors, community members on teams for the conduct of its component projects.

A cross-cutting theme in most projects within the Early Childhood Development Intercultural Partnerships program is the exploration of community-university partnerships (sometimes referred to as community-based research or CBR). Nearly all of the projects are instigated by or supported by communities that will be affected by the research. The projects are shaped through dialogue between university-based team members and community representatives. The community-university partnerships developed for research in the Early Childhood Development Intercultural Partnerships program approach ethics as an evolving process of respectful engagement, negotiation, planning and action. Partners are seen as meeting in a ‘space between’ that no partner has dominion over. This space between has been imagined before, by scholars such as Roger Poole and Willie Ermine.

The projects are characterized by extensive commitments of time and research monies to engender working relationships involving trust and reciprocity. Various tools, such as memoranda of understanding, memoranda of agreement, and terms of reference have
been explored. These tools can increase transparency, stimulate discussion, ensure informed consent, and serve as a written record for ongoing re-confirmation or re-negotiation of agreements.

Community-university partnership processes are innovative, ambiguous, and arduous. Most often, they succeed in broadening channels of communication, causing new light to be cast on the way a research topic has been framed, what assumptions have been made by various parties, how the topic could fruitfully be explored, what is already known in the community about the topic, and the range of partners’ viewpoints, concerns, and goals for the research. Within the Early Childhood Development Intercultural Partnership Program, community-university partnerships are often experienced as a form of ‘Extreme Research’ - adventures across uncharted territories, where exasperated calls of “Are we there yet?”, exclamations of “You’ll never believe what happened!” and “Eureka!” moments predictably punctuate each journey. Enacting new concepts of ethical praxis through community-university partnerships is always a learning experience. Reflections on these forays have been reported at conferences and in publications noted below.

**KEY RESOURCES**

**ECDIP Publications, Presentations, and Reports**


**Readings**

Suggested reading list: [http://www.ecdip.org/ethics/readings.htm](http://www.ecdip.org/ethics/readings.htm)
Web Links


University of Victoria, Principles and Protocols for Research Involving Indigenous Peoples: http://web.uvic.ca/igov/research