

A background image of a mountain range with a blue and grey color palette. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the left side of the image, containing the title text.

INDIGENOUS RESEARCH SUPPORT INITIATIVE **STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK**

For many years, university research has followed an extractive model, with detrimental impacts on Indigenous communities, operating in circumstances of unequal power and without regard for community concerns, needs or interests.

Research developed and conducted in collaboration with Indigenous communities that addresses community concerns, however, can produce more equitable research that not only contributes to community autonomy, strength and resiliency, but results in more productive and effective inquiry.

TRC Call to Action #65 charges governments and institutions “to establish a national research program with multi-year funding to advance the understanding of reconciliation.” One of the most important ways in which research initiatives can “advance understanding of reconciliation” is to directly address both systemic imbalances of power and assumptions about knowledge and agency that have structured research practices of the past.

The **Indigenous Research Support Initiative** (IRSI) is based on the premise that more effective research and greater mutual understanding can be developed from identifying, developing, and supporting research practices that proceed from respectful relations between researchers and Indigenous communities.

While IRSI is not restrictive of the practices of university researchers in working with Indigenous communities, it is designed to bring attention to newer approaches to research that are more likely to address community needs and priorities in ways that respect community interests and autonomy. Its description is included in this Appendix to the Indigenous Strategic Plan not only to identify it as a major Indigenous initiative, but to suggest as well a major trajectory in the future of Indigenous research methodologies and relations that it will reflect and help to define.

Intent

The Intent of the Initiative is to provide professional research support and services to Indigenous communities and university researchers to undertake collaborative projects based on community-led interests, reciprocal relationships, and principles of mutual accountability.



The Initiative is committed to:

- Enabling collaborative partnerships by identifying and supporting collaborative research with Indigenous communities and creating opportunities for dialogue and open exchanges of views
- Developing and supporting better practices of engagement, building university and community capacity to undertake collaborative projects, and co-creating principles and effective practices of engagement that advance the transformation of research practices at institutional, regional and national levels which respect and benefit communities
- Supporting excellence in research and the development of emerging projects and research clusters among Indigenous communities, university researchers, and other partners

Initiative Strategies

To ensure that the work of the IRSI is reflective of the needs and processes of Indigenous communities, it will take direction from Advisory Committees on each campus comprised of individuals from BC and/or local Indigenous communities and faculty and staff from both UBCO and UBCV. This will allow the local and regional context at each campus to be honored. The set of initial strategies noted below will undoubtedly develop and change over time with experience and the assessment and advice of researchers, partners, and the Advisory Committees.

Strategy: Collaborative Clusters

Research questions rarely present themselves to communities in isolation, and meaningfully addressing them often involves the engagement of a range of coordinated expertise. A major aim of the IRSI is to address this reality through the formation of coordinated multi-disciplinary research teams, and to

- Assist in the development of interdisciplinary research clusters through creating relationships and connecting researchers and Indigenous communities
- Promote the development of innovative research methodologies that are integrative and interdisciplinary
- Promote the principles of Participatory Action Research emphasizing community-based research and action
- Support established and new innovative partnership structures that put the priorities of Indigenous communities front and centre in collaborative partnerships

Strategy: Research Support

Collaborative Indigenous research is an emerging field with a rapidly developing array of practices that are, as yet, less familiar in many disciplines and inadequately addressed in many existing support structures. There is considerable advantage in developing supports and services for Indigenous communities and UBC researchers engaging in ethical and collaborative research relationships and projects, and in

- Facilitating the development of Indigenous research data management practices adhering to OCAP™ principles
- Co-developing principles of engagement, processes, tools/templates and protocols to enable effective engagement with Indigenous communities



- Developing a research information repository and communication portal that provides histories of relationships between UBC and Indigenous communities; and assists communities and researchers access resources, information, publications, reports
- Developing an Indigenous research leadership cohort of scholars that provides mentorship, mutual support and professional development opportunities
- Developing shared infrastructure to support Indigenization efforts through dedicated culturally safe spaces for partnerships with the UBCO campus and between UBCO and community partners

Strategy: Knowledge Exchange

One difficulty facing both communities seeking research assistance and researchers is making connections in an emerging landscape, with each other, and with other partners and funding agencies. The initiative will

- Support Indigenous community initiatives seeking relevant connections to researchers for their unique priorities
- Support researchers and Indigenous communities in connecting with external partners to implement research outcomes for social and economic impact
- Assist in finding resources to support the development of partnerships
- Identify and support different approaches for knowledge exchange
- Communicate value of and create opportunities for knowledge creation and exchange, dialogue and discussion

Strategy: Research Culture

To materially affect university research culture, it is necessary to identify examples of successful inclusive, positive and respectful research practices that can help to define approaches to research that strengthen research relationships with Indigenous communities. The Initiative will

- Co-develop training programs with Indigenous community partners for researchers and graduate students entering or wishing to enter collaborative relationships
- Create a safe and supportive environment where Indigenous communities and researchers can have difficult conversations
- Promote community-led, community designed, place-based research partnerships
- Promote the adoption of evolving “better practices” grounded in appropriate approaches that Indigenous communities define as respectful and appropriate.