

RESEARCH POLICY

RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

Driven by a fundamental belief in and respect for tribal sovereignty and Native wisdom, First Nations Development Institute's research is aimed at preserving, protecting and strengthening American Indian control over the assets that they own—including financial, natural, physical, institutional, human, social, cultural and spiritual assets. Believing that research is essential to making informed decisions, First Nations seeks to identify relevant policy issues and promote promising practices that will strengthen American Indian capacity and control of their assets. The goal is to empower local leaders and identify successful practices that will help American Indians direct their own economic futures. First Nations strives to conduct research that is culturally sensitive, acknowledges and respects Native American worldviews, and benefits Native communities. First Nations consults with community and tribal leaders to inform the development and shaping of research questions, and in turn shares findings with partner communities.

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First Nations' staff conducts research in a range of areas including program evaluation, topical research, and policy research. The goal of the research is to highlight key issues affecting Native American communities and to provide data to inform decision-making. First Nations' staff works closely with First Nations' grantmaking department and our project partners to collect research data from local communities and to identify key policy issues, lessons learned and promising practices. This connection with local communities ensures that our approach to research is grounded in the experiences of community members and community projects. First Nations also collects evaluation data on several of our programs and trainings through surveys, interviews and other means. We also periodically conduct research on a broad range of asset-building topics that requires analyzing publicly available secondary data. First Nations Development Institute recognizes the challenges associated with conducting research in Native communities and acknowledges Native nations' sovereign rights to control the use of the data in research reports. Because of the sensitive nature of conducting research in Native communities, First Nations uses the following research protocols:

1. **Informed consent:** All grantees and community partners are informed of how the research data will be used and of any rare but possible risks involved. Research partners are given an informed consent sheet that provides information about the goals of the research, the research project key staff, and the rights of those participating in the research. If a tribe has an Institutional Review Board (IRB), First Nations Development Institute will work with the IRB to gain permission to collect data from community members and community programs.

2. **Voluntary participation and the right to “opt out” of research projects:** Participation in research projects is completely voluntary. All research partners may refuse to participate in a research project if they are not comfortable with the goals of the research or any other aspect of the research. Non-participation in a research project by a partner will not affect our relationship with or view of that partner.
3. **Ownership of research data:** We acknowledge that data and stories belong to a tribe or community, and we commit that we will only use collected data for the stated purpose of our research, and that the ownership of data and stories will revert to a tribe or a group after the research has been completed. Our research partners have the right to approve the final use of the data in any published work.
4. **Protection of identity:** Our projects will protect the anonymity or confidentiality of individuals, tribes, and communities whenever possible unless individuals, tribes, and communities have been informed otherwise and given a chance to opt out. If appropriate, any individual or group asked to complete a research or evaluation tool will be issued a statement of confidentiality. Following the collection of data, all responses to research or evaluation questions will be kept secure to protect the confidentiality of data in perpetuity
5. **The right to review the research product before it gets published:** First Nations Development Institute staff will make every effort to supply research partners with a draft of any final research report for them to review and provide feedback on before First Nations publishes it. For more information about First Nations Development Institute’s approach to conducting research in Native communities, please contact staff at info@firstnations.org.

All internal and external research projects and publications by First Nations Development Institute will strive to follow this Research Policy and reflect the values, ethics, and protocols found in this policy.