



Indigenous Foods Knowledges Network

Network Charter

The inaugural meeting of the Indigenous Foods Knowledges Network (IFKN) was held on March 1-2, 2018 at the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) in Arizona. The meeting was hosted by Althea Walker and colleagues from the GRIC Department of Environmental Quality and convened by a research team from the University of Colorado at Boulder (CU) and the University of Arizona (UA).

The kickoff meeting at GRIC included twenty-three Indigenous and non-Indigenous community leaders and scholars from the Southwest and Arctic. The primary goal of the meeting was to begin to articulate the core principles for the IFKN and establish an initial set of goals that could guide a network of Indigenous leaders, citizens, and scholars focused on the nexus of Indigenous foods and knowledge systems.

Based on the discussions that took place during the 1.5 day workshop, the IFKN research team and steering committee developed a charter that articulates principles and goals for the network. A draft version of the charter was shared with the participants in the GRIC meeting and IFKN listserv members for feedback. The current IFKN charter therefore incorporates input from many individuals. It is intended to be a living document that can be revisited with direction of the IFKN steering committee.

About the Network

The overarching goal of the Indigenous Foods Knowledges Network (IFKN) is to develop a network comprised of Indigenous leaders, citizens, and scholars (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) who are focused on research and community capacity related to food sovereignty and resilience, and who will collectively work to promote and carry out research that 1) utilizes Indigenous research processes, 2) embraces and respects Indigenous Knowledge systems, and 3) supports Indigenous communities.

A research team from the University of Colorado at Boulder (CU) and the University of Arizona (UA)¹ received four years of funding for the IFKN from the National Science Foundation through the Office of Polar Programs to develop a [Research Coordination Network](#) (RCN). The following organizations provided letters of support for the proposal:

- Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska
- Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
- Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage
- Department of Environmental Quality, Gila River Indian Community
- Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona
- Alaska Arctic Observatory and Knowledge Hub (AAOKH)
- Project Jukebox, University of Alaska Fairbanks

¹ The research team includes: Colleen Strawhacker, Peter Pulsifer, and Noor Johnson from University of Colorado; Stephanie Carroll Rainie, Dan Ferguson, Mary Beth Jäger, and Tristan Reader from University of Arizona.

- Geomatics and Cartographic Research Center
- Circum-Arctic Coastal Communities Knowledge Network (CACCON)
- Exchange for Local Observations and Knowledge in the Arctic (ELOKA)
- International Arctic Data Committee
- Climate Assessment for the U.S. Southwest (CLIMAS)
- U.S. Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network
- Research Data Alliance
- Facilitating Indigenous Research, Science, and Technology Network (FIRST RCN)
- Calista Education and Culture

Steering Committee

The research team formed a steering committee to guide the project and build the network. The steering committee includes Indigenous leaders, community members, and scholars from the Alaskan and Canadian Arctic as well as the US Southwest:

Carolina Behe, Inuit Circumpolar Council Alaska
 Orville Huntington (Huslia), Tanana Chiefs Conference
 Michael Kotutwa Johnson (Hopi), University of Arizona, School of Natural Resources
 Amy Juan (Tohono O'odham), Sovereign Remedies LLC
 Anita Kora (Inuit), Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami
 Shawna Larson (Ahtna Athabascan and Supiaq), Chickaloon Village Traditional Council and University of Arizona
 Jamie Wilson (Dine), University of Arizona, College of Public Health
 Althea Walker (Akimel O'otham), University of Arizona, Southwest Climate Adaptation Science Center
 Denali Whiting (Inupiaq), Alaska Humanities Forum

Indigenous Foods Knowledges Network Guiding Principles

- ***At its core, IFKN serves to support and promote Indigenous sovereignty.***
 Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination which derives from Indigenous nations' inherent rights to govern their peoples, lands, and resources. With respect to knowledge and data, this has implications for ownership, control, access, and responsibilities. The activities of IFKN are intended to support the efforts of Indigenous Peoples to govern.
- ***Research by and with Indigenous Peoples should prioritize community-centered, action-oriented frameworks and foster hands-on exchange of knowledge.***
 Research should break down barriers and silos between community experience and academia. Research should also create opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to renew and deepen place-based engagements that promote learning across generations in support of resilient, relationship-based agricultural and hunting, fishing, harvesting, and processing practices.
- ***Indigenous languages are a critical component of food and knowledge sovereignty.*** Investments to preserve and encourage the use of Indigenous languages are essential in efforts toward food and knowledge sovereignty. The predominance of the English language and the tendency to privilege the use of specialized terminology to describe theories in academia and Western science creates creates barriers to

knowledge exchange between indigenous and non-indigenous communities/scholars/researchers. Reliance solely on English and Western science prioritizes those ways of knowing over Indigenous systems, forcing Indigenous Knowledge systems to be assimilated in western research frameworks through specialized terminology that fall short of capturing, or outright conflict with, Indigenous Knowledge systems. It is important to recognize that some concepts that are part of Indigenous languages and knowledge systems cannot be translated into English. When English is used to convey complex ideas across these knowledge systems, the goal should be to facilitate knowledge exchange without prioritizing, favoring, or privileging one way of knowing over another.

- ***Demonstrating respect for Indigenous Knowledge systems is a central tenet of IFKN.*** Indigenous Peoples have many ways of knowing, including ancestral and inherent, shaping dynamic, unique and complex knowledge systems within and across their diverse Peoples. Additionally, some Indigenous Peoples learn and share other knowledge systems, such as Western science. Many Indigenous ways of knowing convey community roles and an individual's responsibilities to their Peoples (past, present, and future), as well as to the natural and spiritual world. Researchers and others engaging with Indigenous Peoples must respect their ways of knowing. Entering into a dialogue between community and researcher encourages Indigenous community-led research, where communities define questions and needs, and collaborate to identify the most appropriate methodologies and research processes and protocols. Such dialogue also supports the use of multiple ways of knowing, including Western science and research methods, to meet Indigenous community needs without privileging Western science.
- ***Indigenous communities have authority over research projects that affect them.*** Indigenous community authority over research relevant to that community is the gold standard. However, many existing projects fail to meet that standard. Therefore, IFKN seeks to work toward remedying this deficiency by promoting the rights of Indigenous communities to define how and what type of research they want to conduct, as well as to share or not share knowledge and data as they wish. This is related to the importance of recognizing Indigenous sovereignty, which supports the rights of Indigenous Peoples to have ultimate control over research in their lands, waters, territories and sacred sites based on the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent. Despite the fact that Indigenous-led projects, research, and policies may differ from what universities, non-Indigenous governments, and Western scientists consider the norm, the IFKN strongly asserts the importance of adhering to community goals, wishes, and desired research outcomes in partnerships between researchers and Indigenous communities. Researchers working in and with Indigenous communities should ensure that research is benefiting communities by creating opportunities for engagement, including research and employment. This should occur across all stages of a research project, from design to data collection to sharing results at conferences and using knowledge to inform decision-making for the benefit of communities.
- ***Community concerns over Indigenous foods, seeds, air, lands, and waters, plants, and animals must be identified, recognized and respected when developing partnerships.*** Indigenous community concerns about respect for and access to natural and cultural resources must be identified and addressed. Many Indigenous Peoples feel

a sense of responsibility towards Indigenous foods, seeds, air, lands and waters, and plants and animals, which is reflected in particular ethics of care and stewardship. For example, a farmer may worry about the integrity and spirit of the seeds that she cultivates and the impact that disrespect for these characteristics has on the plants, people, and communities from which they come. Another growing concern is increased challenges to accessing traditional foods. For example, changes in the environment and governance in the Arctic have resulted in restrictions to the accessibility of traditional plants and animals. In Arizona, a growing market for tepary beans—a locally-important traditional food—among non-Indigenous consumers drives up the price, resulting in reduced affordability for Indigenous community members. These community concerns must stand at the heart of all research projects.

- ***Data are powerful tools for Indigenous communities when they reflect core values.*** The word data can be off-putting to Indigenous Peoples because of unethical behavior in the past by researchers and policy makers in exploiting Indigenous data or seeing data as a concept only related to Western science. Despite the baggage associated with the word data, the proliferation of data in the modern world and the continued stewardship of Indigenous data by non-Indigenous groups requires an Indigenous response. Indigenous communities use data and knowledge to govern and strengthen their communities. Often, non-Indigenous governments and organizations do not understand the broad range of governance styles and data needs across Indigenous nations. Collection of data by non-Indigenous government organizations often fails to capture information relevant to Indigenous Peoples or allow Indigenous oversight of data. In order to be useful for communities, data must reflect the core values and ways of knowing and remain under the ultimate control of the communities within which they are generated.
- ***Partnerships demand ethical relationships.*** Researchers and other collaborators must operate with the highest level of respect for and ethical behavior toward Indigenous Peoples and communities. They must act as allies of Indigenous Peoples and engage in a process of building relationships based on trust, consistency, and accountability.

Network goals

1. **Take action.** Find a niche, establish a plan, and connect peoples.
2. **Work across multiple scales.** Indigenous Peoples in the Southwest and Arctic engage with different institutions, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, across various scales of governance (global, national, regional, community). The IFKN must strategize about how to best engage across these multiples scales.
3. **Support Indigenous Knowledge systems as defined and represented by Indigenous Peoples.** Encourage and educate researchers and decision-makers to respect and equitably engage Indigenous Knowledge holders. This includes providing opportunities for Indigenous Knowledge holders to represent their own knowledge systems in decision-making, and to hold up and promote the value of Indigenous Knowledge.
4. **Support Indigenous research and data governance.** Share strategies and resources for how to create or strengthen Indigenous communities' own research and data governance protocols, policies, and procedures.
5. **Advocate for ethical research and data partnerships.** Educate researchers about forming strong, impactful, and respectful partnerships with Indigenous communities. In

particular, work to ensure that research done in Indigenous territories is carried out ethically, in good faith, and in collaboration with or at least with the consent of the impacted communities. Indigenous communities should lead the inquiry, establishing priorities, needs, and research questions. Researchers should make efforts to build and support community-centered and led educational initiatives on research and data collection, analysis, and governance. This facilitates community understanding, ownership, and knowledge of data that will support efforts to sustain their Ways of Life. Additionally, active dialogue between researchers and community members encourages community engagement, capacity and capability building, and know-how in order to access and utilize the research.

6. **Connect across generations.** Intergenerational transfer of knowledge is key for ensuring food and data sovereignty. Therefore, the IFKN must engage across generations, encompassing youth, adults, and elders, to facilitate this transfer.
7. **Engage Indigenous scholars.** Community-centered Indigenous scholars provide one of the greatest assets to the IFKN and therefore need to be central to the project. Indigenous scholars can be the catalyst for action by communicating with community members and advocating for community-based research. The network should strive to open innovative pathways for Indigenous scholars to engage with communities.
8. **Establish a Network of Networks.** Connect with complementary networks that address similar goals to the IFKN. Doing so could create more resources, connections, and action in the areas of food, knowledge, and data sovereignty.