

Human Subjects Research with American Indians/Alaska Natives

From [The Office of Tribal Relations](#) at WSU:

Washington State University's Pullman campus is located on the homelands of the Nimiipuu (Nez Perce) Tribe and Palus people, while WSU Vancouver is housed on traditional Cowlitz lands, WSU Tri-Cities is on traditional lands of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla and the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakima Nation, and WSU Spokane on historical Spokane Tribe lands. Each of the tribes that are signatory to the [MOU \[Memorandum of Understanding\]](#) are either located within the borders of what is today the state of Washington or their aboriginal territories included areas that are now within the boundaries of the state of Washington. Their presence on this land is since time immemorial.

From [WSU's Land Acknowledgement](#):

As a land grant institution, we also recognize that the Morrill Act of 1862 established land-grant institutions by providing each state with "public" and federal lands, which are traced back to the disposition of Indigenous lands. In 1890, Washington State received 90,081 acres of Indigenous Lands designated to establish Washington State University ([see data](#)). Washington State University retains the majority of these lands to this day. We acknowledge that the disposition of Indigenous lands was often taken by coercive and violent acts, and the disregard of treaties. For that, we extend our deepest apologies. We owe our deepest gratitude to the Native peoples of this region and maintain our commitment towards reconciliation.

Laws and Policies

There are currently no specific federal laws for research with AI/AN populations. However, to further WSU's commitment towards collaboration and education, institutional policies were created to ensure additional protection AI/AN participants (regardless of federal tribal recognition status or location within the United States) in human subjects research because of past ethical abuses (much like the federal protections already in place for children, prisoners, and pregnant people when research is focusing on the fetus or neonate).

Review Requirements

Both exempt and non-exempt projects that have a specific Tribe or Tribes as the priority population are reviewed by one of the IRB's AI/AN reviewers. If a project is focusing on AI/AN participants in general and tribal membership or affiliation is not the focus, then a review by an AI/AN specialty reviewer on the IRB is not needed.

Before Research Begins

Each Tribe is a sovereign nation along with their own laws and standards of conduct for research. It is the responsibility of the researcher to meet with Tribal leadership and receive approval from them for research activities taking place within their sovereign nation. Research collected by the researchers belongs to the Tribe; PIs should be aware that their data does not solely belong to them/WSU.

Contacts for Support

Researchers are encouraged to contact the [Center for Native American Research and Collaboration](#). This office provides ethical research practices and tribal research policy support to faculty, students and staff at WSU. Both Dr. Strong and Dr. Lokensgard at the CNARC provide necessary cultural perspectives and expertise as members of the WSU Institutional Review Board

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[IREACH](#) (Institute for Research and Education to Advance Community Health)
[Partnerships For Native Health Faculty](#)

Best Practices

- Study design should be developed with Tribes or Native individuals.
- Researchers are expected to include members of the Tribes in their research teams.
- Do not use the phrase “target population” in your research. “Priority population” or “focus population” is more culturally sensitive.
- Do not name specific tribes in research publications to avoid group harms.
- Even publicly available data sets, when combined and analyzed, have the potential to create group harms for AI/AN communities. Consult with the Center for Native American Research and Collaboration for guidance during the course of the research collection and analysis.