

Frequently asked questions (FAQ) about
Memorial's new Research Impacting Indigenous Groups policy
For Researchers
Summer 2020

If you have a question about the policy, we recommend you start by reviewing [the policy itself](#) and talking to your unit's [grant facilitators](#) and associate deans of research (or equivalents), who should always have the most up-to-date information available. The contact information

Is the policy in effect this summer (2020)?

The policy was approved by the Board of Regents on July 9, 2020, and we are putting in support so as we can begin in as good a way as possible. Our goal is to provide the most essential support in time for early September 2020. In the meantime, research applications can progress as usual. You can contact your unit's [grant facilitators](#) and associate deans of research (or equivalents) for updates. Updates and support materials are available on our website and will be updated accordingly; please see here <https://www.mun.ca/research/Indigenous/consent.php>.

Where can I learn the basics of the new policy?

We have created a plain language [Introduction to the Research Impacting Indigenous Groups Policy](#) document. Support documents, including the policy itself, are also available online at <https://www.mun.ca/research/Indigenous/consent.php>.

If I have research that is already in place, how do I ensure it won't be interrupted by the policy?

First, there is a grandparenting clause in the policy's procedures that allows researchers time to obtain required documents and permission after the policy comes into effect (365 days from July 9, 2020). Secondly, most existing Indigenous Research at Memorial should already follow the policy requirements—if you have a letter of support, contract, ethics approval, or research agreement in place with an Indigenous governing body then you are very likely covered. [See section 3.1 and 1.7 of the policy](#) for details. If you do not have these in place, we recommend working on obtaining them as soon as possible.

How do I prepare my new research for when the policy comes into effect?

The policy requires that researchers start conversations with Indigenous groups who will be impacted by their research at the earliest stages of research when research questions and design can still be influenced. This should always occur, regardless of the policy, and researchers should start doing this now to be aligned with the policy when it comes into effect. There are several resources to help researchers start this, including a plain language [Introduction to the Research Impacting Indigenous Groups Policy](#), which contains an overview of Indigenous groups in Atlantic Canada, including their research permitting processes. We also have a guide to [Principles of Indigenous Research](#) more generally. Finally, we have competitive [Seed funding](#) available specifically for researchers to build relationships with Indigenous groups in advance of research. Additional questions can be sent to IndigenousResearch@mun.ca.

How will I know if my research will be impacted by the policy?

Whether your research counts as Indigenous Research under the policy is addressed in the section on [Definition of Indigenous Research](#) (which is based on the definition in TCPS2 Ch9). Use this definition as the authoritative guideline on determining if your research falls within the policy. Indigenous Research refers to primary research and secondary use of data and includes:

- i. research conducted on First Nations, Inuit or Métis lands in Canada and Indigenous lands worldwide;
- ii. recruitment criteria that include Indigenous identity as a factor for the entire study or for a subgroup in the study;
- iii. research that seeks input from participants regarding a community's cultural heritage, artifacts, traditional knowledge or unique characteristics;
- iv. research in which Indigenous identity or membership in an Indigenous community is used as a variable for the purpose of analysis of the research data or in the creation of survey tools; and
- v. interpretation of research results that will refer to Indigenous communities, peoples, language, history or culture.

Basically, any form of research, regardless of discipline, that takes place on Indigenous land or uses Indigeneity as a category to recruit, gather or interpret data is Indigenous Research. This includes creating surveys that have Indigenous identity categories.

The policy sets up an unfortunate binary—whether researchers must consult with Indigenous groups impacted by their research or whether they can avoid that conversation. Regardless of whether you *must* under the policy, researchers always *should* be engaged in ongoing conversation with Indigenous groups who are impacted by their research. This is not only part of accountability, but also part of reconciliation and moving from a colonial way of doing research. There is a [best practices and principles guide](#) to doing research in a good way [on our website](#).

There is a plain language [Introduction to the Research Impacting Indigenous Groups Policy](#) document that researchers can use to determine how to best follow the policy. All of our researchers should take the time to review and become familiar with Memorial's new Research Impacting Indigenous Groups policy. Researchers need to understand the importance of the new policy. While research staff such as grant facilitators, research office secretaries, or associate deans of research cannot tell researchers if their research falls within the policy, they can certainly advise and help. Like all ethics guidelines, researchers have the responsibility to ensure they are following policies in their research.

Will classroom research and graduate research require Agreement in Principle?

Yes. This is addressed in detail in [sections 5 and 6 of the policy](#). The request to bring classroom research into a more robust ethics framework was a consistent and strong request by multiple Indigenous groups during the policy's development. Our most inexperienced and vulnerable researchers are brought into this policy both because the research they do is real and thus has real effects in the world (both harm and benefit) and they need to be protected by having their instructors, advisors, or themselves secure Agreement in Principle (CDP). This has to be given by Indigenous groups (rather than departmental committees) in accordance with sovereignty (departmental committees cannot speak on behalf of Indigenous groups).

How does this policy relate to researchers using Indigenous group's internal ethics, review, and permitting processes?

It requires researchers to follow Indigenous groups' protocols. This is addressed in [sections 1.3 and 1.4 of the policy](#): "Obtaining Agreement in Principle (CDP) is in addition to any additional Research Review required by Indigenous Groups and does not circumvent them." How Agreement in Principle is obtained, whether it is obtained, and whether it can be waived is at the digression of the Indigenous group and Memorial will follow their request. "Some Indigenous groups may request a blanket approach to Agreement in Principle." For this, they can email Indigenousresearch@mun.ca.

How will the new policy fit with other research ethics and permitting systems like ICEHR, animal care, and the Health Research Ethics Authority (HREA)?

It is in addition to these systems and is designed to dovetail with them. This is addressed in [section 1.8 of the policy](#) and its [procedures](#). “1.8 Research Review and Agreement in Principle (CDP) is in addition to individual consent from research subjects and any approvals required by Memorial’s *Ethics of Research Involving Human Participants* policy and related procedures and other existing ethics, permitting, and permission procedures.” Agreement in Principle (Concept Development Phase) must always happen first for internal Memorial ethics and permits such as ICEHR and animal care. External review processes, including Indigenous research ethics boards (REBs) and HREA, will determine their need and preferred order for receiving Agreement in Principle (CDP) since they are external to Memorial.

What do we do with Agreement in Principle (Concept Development Stage) documents once we have them?

All researchers should retain copies on file, even if they are not using university infrastructures such as ROMEO, funds, etc. Researchers will append copies of Agreement in Principle (CDP) to all requests and applications for research that flow through university processes such as grant and ethics applications. If you are an instructor conducting Indigenous Research in courses, provide copies of Agreement in Principle (CDP) to your department head for their files.

How do I get help or feedback?

Please start by reading [the policy itself](#) and the [plain-language introduction to the policy available here](#). You can also contact your unit’s grant facilitators, research officers, and associate deans of research (or equivalents), for questions about your research in particular. Research staff and researchers can also email Indigenousresearch@mun.ca. If you are looking for support on learning more about how to do research in a good way, including how to reach out to Indigenous groups, Memorial’s Indigenous Research Advisory Group can help. Contact them by emailing Indigenousresearch@mun.ca.

What is MIRAG? How do I contact them or become a member?

Memorial’s Indigenous Research Advisory Group, or MIRAG, is a central advisory body regarding Indigenous Research at Memorial University. Its main task is to advise on a broad range of researcher and instructor needs related to Indigenous Research at all stages of the process. Usually this means answering questions from researchers (students, faculty, staff, instructors, and even outside bodies). It may also be more involved, including providing informal peer review on applications, methodical guidance and advice, or being asked to sit on key committees or contribute to decisions within the broader university. MIRAG is not responsible for advising on compliance to the Research Impacting Indigenous Groups (RIIG) policy, nor can it make decisions about Agreement in Principle or authority to grant Agreement in Principle under RIIG. However, MIRAG is designed to support researchers engaged with the RIIG policy. Members of MIRAG can be faculty, staff, students, alumni or community members connected with Memorial. All members of MIRAG must be recommended by at least one Indigenous community they work with or within. If you are interested in becoming a member, please email Indigenousresearch@mun.ca.

I am a representative of an Indigenous group and we have someone we want to recommend for MIRAG. How do we do that?

You can send your recommendation to Indigenousresearch@mun.ca directly. We also have an optional template available for the recommendation should you desire (please email Indigenousresearch@mun.ca for the template).

What is CERIIG? How do I contact them or become a member?

Memorial's Committee on Ethical Research Impacting Indigenous Groups (CERIIG) serves as a decision-making body for the [Research Impacting Indigenous Groups policy](#). Its main function is to review applications for Indigenous Research when there are no other Indigenous bodies (governments, groups, etc.) that could provide consent or Agreement in Principle for the research to take place.

All members of CERIIG are Indigenous, but they do not represent their Nations, communities, or employers in their position on CERIIG and abide by strict conflict of interest measures.

Members of CERIIG are recommended for their integrity as well as their experience in Indigenous Research and research ethics. They are chosen by a committee made up of members of the President's Advisory Council on Indigenous Affairs. If you would like to join or nominate someone, please email Indigenousresearch@mun.ca.

Who is behind the Indigenousresearch@mun.ca email?

The email address is one of many resources for all researchers at Memorial (faculty, staff, students, community members) who deal with Indigenous Research and it exists mainly to direct inquiries to the growing and complex ecosystems that exist in the research space. It is overseen by a staff member in the Office of the Vice-President (Research) and is a place to sort and direct inquiries to appropriate bodies. This includes but is not limited to:

- Research Grant and Contract Services (RGCS) resources such as the [Indigenous Research Template](#) that was created to foster Indigenous data sovereignty within research partnerships;
- Help maneuvering the new Research Impacting Indigenous Groups policy, including when and how to access the Committee on Ethics on Research Impacting Indigenous People (CERIIG) when it comes to exist;
- It is the gateway email for researcher inquiries that can be answered by the soon-to-be convened peer-to-peer advisory group on Indigenous Research (Memorial's Indigenous Research Advisory Group, or MIRAG);
- Forwarding community or researcher complaints about research conduct or maneuvering policies, procedures, and expectations to the correct bodies;
- It directs inquiries that should go to HREA, ICEHR, RGCS, grant facilitators, deans or associate deans, the School of Graduate Studies (SGS), the Vice-President (Research), the President, or other bodies that are best suited.

The email address was created in response to requests from faculty and research staff who wanted a one-stop shop for support.

Acronyms:

Agreement in Principle (CDP) = Concept Development Phase (the first stage of research when you are making ideas)

CHIR = Canadian Institutes of Health Research, a federal funding agency

EDI = Equity, Diversity, Inclusion

ICEHR = Memorial's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research

HREA = Health Research Ethics Authority, which oversees ethics for all health research in NL

MUNFA = Memorial University of Newfoundland Faculty Association, the faculty union

NL = Newfoundland and Labrador

REBs = Research Ethics Boards, a generic term that include bodies such as HREA and ICEHR

TCPS2 = Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans

Last updated July 31, 2020