

Decolonizing Community-Engaged Research: Designing CER with Cultural Humility as a Foundational Value

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we uptake the call for equipping researchers in practicing socially just CER in Indigenous communities through developing a framework for cultural humility in CER. Sparked by our research team's experience considering the potential of CER to transform and contribute to the needs of both tribal and academic communities, we present cultural humility as a personal precondition for socially just, decolonial CER practice. We use the Inuit cultural practice of *nalukataq* as a key metaphor to present our framework for cultural humility: listening to the caller, setting your feet, pulling equally, staying in sync.

CCS Concepts

Social and professional topics

Keywords

Community-engaged research, Indigenous sovereignty, Decolonial, Arctic research, Cultural humility

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INTRODUCTION

With the threats of climate change becoming everyday realities in the Arctic, the equitable inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, observations, and knowledges has become an important goal shared by both Arctic Indigenous communities and organizations promoting Arctic research. However, Indigenous organizations and Arctic scientists have raised serious concerns about equity in fulfilling diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) requirements in grant proposal evaluations, as demonstrated by the *Navigating the New Arctic Comment Letter* written by Alaska Native tribal groups (Kawerak, 2020) and the *Arctic Researcher Letter* written and signed by 228 Arctic researchers (Huntington et al., 2021). This point of tension illustrates a gap within the Arctic research community regarding how to engage and incorporate Indigenous communities and knowledges in Arctic community-engaged research (CER) in equitable, respectful, and meaningful ways.

These recent calls for DEI in Arctic research practices, such as CER, have required that Arctic researchers (i.e., researchers whose academic interest involves Arctic regions) adapt and transform their research practices within Arctic Indigenous communities to remain competitive for federal funding. For example, the National Science Foundation's (NSF) lucrative Navigating the New Arctic (NNA) program RFP highlights ethical and equitable engagement with Indigenous communities in CER as part of their grant proposal evaluation (NSF, n.d.) and directs researchers to an Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) website for a compilation of resources on how to build ethical and equitable community partnership in Arctic research (Rohde, 2019). IARPC, a U.S. federal organization that brings Arctic researchers and organizations together with U.S. federal agencies, offices, and organizations, such as NSF, considered a focus on improving participatory research and Indigenous leadership in research a foundational activity towards achieving objectives outlined in the federally mandated Arctic Research Plan 2022–2026. They stated:

Indigenous Peoples have been part of the Arctic region for millennia and their histories, cultures, and knowledge are critical to understanding Arctic systems. Federally funded research efforts, however, have had varying levels of success (or failure) in regularly, sufficiently, and ethically including Arctic peoples. Indigenous Peoples deserve respect from researchers entering their communities, lands, and societies and should have the opportunity to benefit from the research as well as engage in meaningful consultation. (IARPC, n.d., para 1)

While “respect from researchers entering their communities” seems like a relatively simple undertaking to achieve, the embedded, and even foundational, tendrils of colonialism and white supremacy in mainstream academic research practices create barriers to achieving this seemingly simple task (Smith, 2013; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). Furthermore, Indigenous community expectations for what that respect actually looks like is not necessarily based on Western ideals of respect, but rather community-determined cultural value systems and worldviews (Itchuaqiyaq, 2021).

There are many guides/resources readily available for Arctic researchers in doing socially just CER in Arctic communities (e.g., Arctic Data Center, n.d.; Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2018; Nickels et al., 2006; Riddell et al., 2017; Tagalik, n.d.). Despite these ample resources, the *how* of CER is lacking and often leaves community partners feeling frustrated and ultimately disengaged. For example, the Alaska Native non-profit organization, Kawerak (2020), described startling examples of the disrespect tribal organizations have experienced in relation to researchers’ *initial contact* with them about potential CER partnerships. They noted that “many researchers ‘cold-call’ [their] organizations with only a few weeks or less before the RFP deadlines” (p. 5), which leaves zero time for them to adequately consider and contribute to the proposed research. We think it is important to quote the insights that Kawerak professionals share, since it identified the core issue with CER approaches without cultural humility as a foundational value:

All of the researchers who contacted our organizations to ‘partner’ (or collaborate, or co-produce) reached out with almost or fully-developed research proposals. They had already determined the research topic, the research questions, methods, project leaders and staff, timelines, budgets, etc. This model of ‘partnering’ fundamentally undermines the process of co-production that our organizations support. Often the researchers/proposals that claimed ‘co-production’ only wanted a letter of support or endorsement (which is not co-productive research) or, once we expressed concern about the lack of time to contribute in an equitable way, the request would change from ‘partner with us’ to ‘well, can we just get a letter of support then?’ There were no opportunities to provide significant or meaningful input to these proposals. (p. 5)

Considering that this disrespect for tribal sovereignty occurs in the initial communication with tribal organizations, it calls into question whether academic partners are capable of effectively incorporating respect and humility into the design of the research processes itself.

In this article, we take up the call for equipping researchers in practicing socially just CER in Indigenous communities through developing a framework for cultural humility in CER. Sparked

by our research team’s experience considering the potential of CER to transform and contribute to the needs of both tribal and academic communities, we present cultural humility as a personal *precondition* for socially just, decolonial¹ CER practice.

SCHOLARLY CONTEXTS

Technical and professional communication (TPC) has long been developing socially just CER approaches. Numerous scholars (Agboka, 2014; Bloom-Pojar & Barker, 2020; Torrez et al., 2017; Walton et al., 2015) have shared strategies for creating more equitable power roles in CER affecting decision-making and direction, navigating the field, establishing and maintaining trust, and holding space and time to listen and learn together with community partners. A common thread is active engagement with community partner’s values, such as *confianza* (Bloom-Pojar & Barker, 2020), *comunidad de cuentistas* (Torrez et al., 2017), *ubufatnye* (Walton et al., 2015), and *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiut* (Itchuaqiyaq, 2021). Currently, there is a sharp increase in calls and funding for Arctic-based CER. Yet, the broader scientific research community is struggling to confront its history of settler-colonialism and how their models of research maintain white, Western-European power, knowledge, and values—science that engages communities without truly thinking about how research can and should serve the community’s self-determination.

Numerous new CER initiatives have been set into motion in response to the extractive history of Arctic researchers with shallow partnership goals. For example, the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) (2018), a Canadian organization that unifies 65,000 Inuit across 53 communities, set an ambitious “National Inuit Strategy on Research” for all Arctic research. They set criteria for researchers to move their community-outreach approaches, which excludes Inuit from the research process, to equitably and proactively include and invest in Inuit as rightsholders, experts, and collaborators, rather than sidelined stakeholders who lack true agency to contribute to Inuit self-determined goals and broader societal knowledge. This ITK initiative challenges community-outreach approaches that only re-package community-extractive research that largely aims at obtaining access to the natural land and resources integral to Arctic research. Further, ITK’s initiative is one example among many (see Itchuaqiyaq, 2021; Nickels et al., 2006; Tagalik, n.d.) that might guide equitable practices in the Arctic, each of which stem from Indigenous communities’ own ethical practices.

Naming and addressing power in research matters, since it impacts the partnerships that people establish. Drake et al. (2022) conducted a meta-review of 72 community-outreach studies with Indigenous communities in Arctic regions between 1992 and 2020. They found a sharp increase in community and participatory language within their methodologies, beginning in the late 2000s. However, among all of the studies, *none* were Indigenous-led (p. 899). More so, the majority of the studies (81%) engaged minimally with communities, despite using methodological terms, such as “community-based,” “community-driven,” “collaborative,” “co-productive,” etc. (p. 899). Just as the testimonies of Alaska Native organizations describe, Drake et al. found that most researchers only consulted a few people after the initial conceptual and planning phases, while others designed their projects as purely contractual with Indigenous communities. They highlight how such research typically sought to attain access for the collection of data or to establish research centers

¹ See Itchuaqiyaq & Matheson (2021) for more information about decolonial research.

owned and operated solely by academics. ITK (2018) and Drake et al. demonstrated the need for clearly defined methodologies related to co-productive Arctic research, because its early iterations have produced very little change in existing power relations between academics and Indigenous communities.

This continuing practice of CER in name only has created a consensus across Arctic research guides (Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, 2018; Veazey et al., 2022) to always include communities from the beginning conceptualization phase of research design. Our framework extends these calls by establishing a legible, socially-just path for researchers to gain the internal skills necessary to serve communities, rather than merely engage communities in superficial ways. Research as service to community starts during the conceptualization phase, but there is work to be done even before that. Our framework guides researchers to develop a *culturally humble* perspective to CER that equips them to serve the needs of a community and invest in the community's self-determination better. We argue that a culturally humble perspective is a necessary component for ethical and socially just community and research outcomes in CER.

Before we define our framework for Cultural Humility (CH), we describe the community contexts, their value systems, and the project that guided our creation of it. From there, we preface the directives of the CH framework with a description about the Inuit practice called *nalukataq*. As we explain later, *nalukataq* is an ancient cooperative activity also known as the blanket toss. This blanket toss requires numerous people to listen and work in sync with each other, so they can ultimately gain a perspective of the land that would otherwise not be possible. This goal to see great distances, when working in harmony with each other, grounds each of the roles and responsibilities of community leaders, members, and researchers. Finally, we discuss what we collectively learned from this framework in light of our own CER.

COMMUNITY CONTEXTS

About the NANA Region, the Iñupiat Iḷitqusiāt, and the Rematriation Project

This article is based on the experience of a community-academic collaboration, known as the Rematriation Project, between Aqqaluk Trust, a tribal organization serving the Iñupiat of northwest Alaska, and interdisciplinary academic faculty members (TPC and library and data science) at Virginia Tech. This partnership was initially brought together through the personal and professional connections of one faculty team member (Cana Uluak Itchuaqiyāq) who is a tribal member and grew up in this region. Furthermore, Itchuaqiyāq is the sister of Aqqaluk Trust's Director of Operations, and Rematriation Project team leader, Corina Qaāgraq Kramer.

The NANA Region is a large area in northwest Alaska roughly the size of Indiana. This remote region is home to roughly 8,000 Iñupiat living in the 10 villages surrounding the hub village Kotzebue and is totally off of the road system. In other words, access to and within the Kotzebue region is limited to access by planes, boats in the summer, and snowmobiles in the winter. The NANA Region is considered a "frontline" community regarding climate change impacts. In 2015, President Barack Obama announced his climate resilience plan at the Kotzebue Middle/High School gymnasium. In his speech, Obama called the nation "to help communities build more resilient infrastructure. You shouldn't wait until disaster strikes. We should see if we can invest in communities before the

disaster strikes to prevent it" (2015). The NANA Region, situated on the western coast of Alaska above the Arctic Circle, is an area that Arctic researchers and funding agencies are increasingly investing in as a research site because, as NSF stated in their NNA grant information, "Arctic temperatures are warming faster than nearly everywhere else on Earth" (n.d.). As research activities continue to increase in this region, the need for Inuit-created frameworks for equitable community engagement in these communities also increases.

Equitable community engagement with the Iñupiat of the NANA Region begins with understanding that their community's value system, known as the Iñupiat Iḷitqusiāt, is central to community practices and represents a worldview that both challenges and complements typical Western academic practices and sense-making (Itchuaqiyāq, 2021). The Iñupiat Iḷitqusiāt are tools that help to effectively facilitate academic-community engagement in a manner that is respectful and productive in Iñupiat community contexts. While there are 17 codified values in the Iñupiat Iḷitqusiāt, all of which support socially just CER, in this article we will focus on humility. The NANA Regional Elders Council stated that "in humility is strength. A humble person is strong of character and does not need to boast. A boastful person shows lack of character" (NANA, 2016, p. 35). Further, the Elder Council provided specific instruction about humility:

- Speak only the truth about your deeds.
- Others who have witnessed your deed will speak for you.
- Never embellish, as people will lose their respect when the truth is known.
- Bragging is an embarrassment.
- It is wrong to pass judgment on others.
- Never think that you are better than anyone else.
- Elders and parents should teach and model humility.
- Effective leaders practice humility.

Our focus on humility, and specifically cultural humility, as a necessary precursor to socially just—or even merely effective—CER in Inuit and other marginalized communities is meant to equip scholars with practical tools for designing effective and equitable research and research partnerships. In truth, learning to use these tools can be difficult and certainly takes time to practice. Regardless, as our positive experience as a CER team has demonstrated, personally and professionally investing in a CH perspective yields important returns.

The Rematriation Project is an Inuit-led, Inuit-serving project that aims to increase local, Inuit capacities in digital archiving and data literacy in the face of environmental crises that threaten the cultural heritage and documented knowledges of the NANA Region. Furthermore, the Rematriation Project aims to create a model for equitable, respectful, and sustainable engagement with Inuit communities. Our team recognizes that having Iñupiat team members with a close-knit relationship (Itchuaqiyāq & Kramer) leading both the academic and community sides of the project is a unique opportunity for frank and productive dialogue about how to do social justice CER that actually feels like justice.

Nalukataq

Nalukataq (*nuh-look-uh-tuhq*), known as the blanket toss, is an ancient Inuit cooperative activity that allowed for long-distance

observations for hunting and other purposes (Figure 1 and Figure 2). *Nalukataq* is still practiced in Inuit communities. In *nalukataq*, a jumper is tossed high into the air from a round walrus skin blanket pulled taut by 20 or more pullers. The pullers are arranged and led by a caller whose role is to make sure that the pullers are in sync with one another and pulling equally on the blanket. The pullers set their feet in an active stance, with one foot slightly in front of another, and their arms remain straight as they lean back with their bodies to pull the blanket. The pullers, regardless of their personal strength, must pull evenly with one another or they risk injuring the jumper and even themselves. The pullers and the jumper rely on the caller to make decisions for the group, based on the caller's observations and expertise, in order to assure that the blanket is moving up and down rhythmically so that the *nalukataq* activity is safe and successful. The caller is both leading the activity as well as participating in it. Because there are many people contributing to the work of pulling the walrus skin blanket, the force needed from each puller is relatively minimal. If the pullers don't cooperate and pull too hard or out of rhythm, then they risk tossing the jumper unevenly or causing a bad fall. In other words, pullers need to act as one, releasing themselves from their individualistic perspective, yield their individual authority to the caller, and submit to the cooperative rhythm of the group for success. In the role of a puller, asserting individual strength—even if it seems like pulling hard is what is needed for the jumper to be tossed high into the air—is contrary to the efficacy of *nalukataq*. A good puller listens intently to the caller—whose role is watching the blanket and the jumper and making group decisions based on their observations and expertise—and becomes one with the other pullers and the walrus skin blanket.

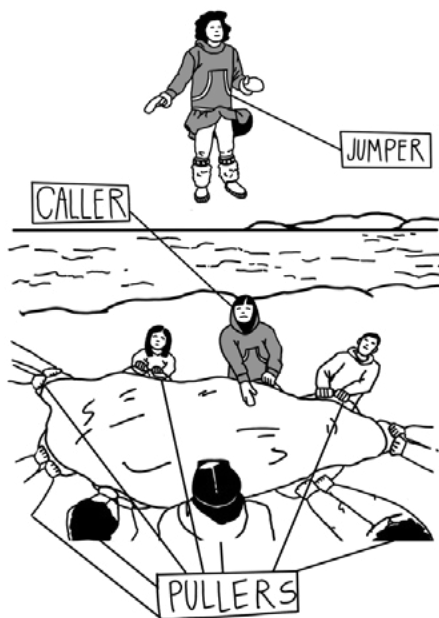


Figure 1
Nalukataq: The caller is directing pullers, their hand feeling the movement of the blanket. The jumper is tossed straight up into the air from a walrus skin blanket in a balanced orientation. Illustration by Dylan Paisaq Crosby, courtesy of Aqqaluk Trust.

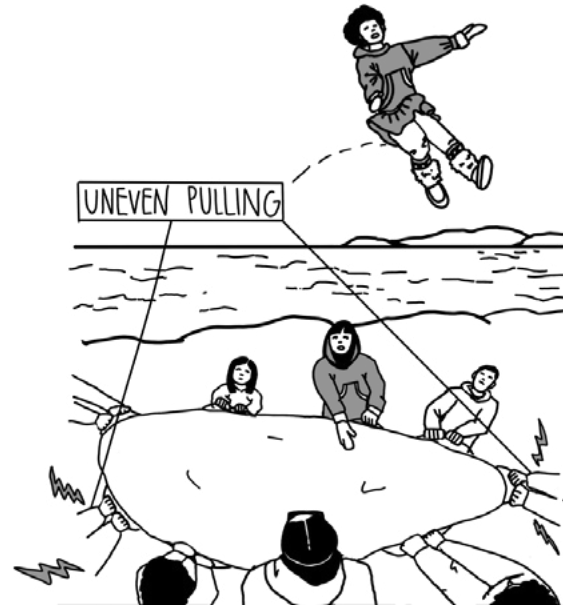


Figure 2
Nalukataq: The pullers are pulling unevenly and the jumper is tossed into the air in an unbalanced orientation. Illustration by Dylan Paisaq Crosby, courtesy of Aqqaluk Trust.

Once everyone is pulling in sync, then the blanket moves up and down like a diaphragm breathing, and it feels effortless and harmonious. The jumper can then be safely tossed up into the air (Figure 1) and they are able to focus on making their observations to aid community decision-making practices and activities (or just have fun in contemporary events).

The example of the *nalukataq* is useful in understanding the ways that research with community partners can become unbalanced, distort the purpose of research, and even become harmful if researchers don't adopt a CH perspective. In this article, we will use *nalukataq* as a grounding metaphor to describe the need for cultural humility as preparation and practice in socially just CER.

CULTURAL HUMILITY AS A FRAMEWORK FOR CER

Cultural humility is distinct from cultural competence. Cultural competency is becoming acquainted with facts about another culture in order to be able to interact with people from that culture effectively. Cultural humility, on the other hand, "incorporates a lifelong commitment to self-evaluation and self-critique, to redressing the power imbalances in the [community-researcher] dynamic, and to developing mutually beneficial and non-paternalistic [research] and advocacy partnerships with communities" (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998, p. 117). In other words, cultural humility is the internal work necessary to interact with other cultures in an equitable, respectful, and meaningful way. We argue that developing a CH perspective is a necessary precondition for socially just CER.

In this section, we use edited excerpts from transcripts of conversations we had as a CER team discussing our research and the work needed for socially just CER. This was a writing method

that we developed with our community partner, Corina Qaaḡraq Kramer, to ensure that we centered her ideas and voice throughout our definition of CH.

A Framework for Cultural Humility

Kramer, our main caller, emphasized how a CH perspective to research addresses the question of “*Who holds the power?*” Researchers must adopt a culturally humble approach to planning the goals for their projects, which demands that they submit and listen to Inuit communities. A CH perspective puts the onus on researchers to carefully consider how their positionality shifts across contexts and recognize the historical problems between academics and Indigenous communities that persist to this day, such as ignoring, minimizing, or manipulating Indigenous communities’ expertise, knowledges, and goals.

The NANA regional Elders provide guidance for Iñupiat to incorporate humility into their life practices, such as “never think that you are better than anyone else” and “never embellish” (NANA, 2016, p. 35). We extend their wisdom toward CER activities using the cooperative strategies of *nalukataq* as a guide to a developing CH perspective: listen to the caller, set your feet, pull equally, and stay in sync.

Listening to the caller: Respecting and submitting to community leadership

The caller represents community members who will direct the planning and actions. *Listening to the caller* cuts across all of the other actions to establish trust, respect, and expectations between communities and researchers during CER. Listening with a CH perspective charges researchers, as pullers, to invest time and resources to understand how they are reflective of a violent history and relationships with Inuit communities. If researchers invest the time necessary to build relationships, that’s a sign of *honor*. Researchers need to build in time for the community, to listen to and understand one another and collaboratively vision, plan and execute the project. Even community members, such as Kramer and Itchuaqiyag, must speak to Elders and their community before they can speak for or about the community.

If pullers do not listen to the caller, pullers put the success of *nalukataq* as well as the community (the jumper) at risk (Figure 2). Not listening to the caller ignores the safety and needs of the jumper. Investing the time for listening to the community’s true needs and perspectives equips researchers to design communication and research strategies that recognize Indigenous sovereignty. Moreover, risks from misusing a community partner’s social capital are harmful and disrespectful (Itchuaqiyag et al., 2023). Kramer shared a story of a community member involved in gathering qualitative data for a research project:

One woman was asked to partner on a food study where researchers wanted a community research assistant who would ask her community questions. Of course, the researcher had to submit their interview questions to the IRB in advance, and after it was approved by the IRB and interviews were scheduled, the woman was then given the chance to review the questions. She told me, “This is embarrassing. This is not even worded how we talk to each other up here.” So, she quit, even though it paid very well. This is what happens when researchers don’t ask us—like really ask us—about what to do in our own communities. (personal communication, September 26,

2022)

A CH perspective is important in cross-cultural contexts, especially with consideration to differences in positionality, privilege, and power (Walton et al., 2019). For example, researchers must actively avoid dialogue that (re)centers researchers’ plans and ambitions over community goals. Instead, a CH perspective helps researchers to redirect misguided energy put into microaggressions, such as “listening to respond/waiting to speak,” toward listening to understand one another. Kramer highlighted the painful reality of how “Inuit have been steamrolled in every which way, even in conversation. We’re used to it now, but that doesn’t make it okay. It’s not normal for researchers to come to us and let *us* lead” (personal communication, October 31, 2022). Research conversations can be manipulated to achieve the researchers’ desired outcomes and it leaves community partners disappointed. But listening to the caller means actively responding to the caller’s guidance. In practice, we suggest the following to develop a CH perspective while listening to the caller:

- Prepare yourself for listening and pay attention to your internal dialogue.
 - * What are your motivations based on?
 - * Are you preparing a response that leads the discussion back to your own goals?
- Remember that communication styles vary across cultures.
 - * What “soft nos” and non-verbal cues related to comprehension and consent should you be aware of?
 - * How can you confirm that “yes” is being communicated, especially with regards to comprehension and consent?
 - * What assumptions are you making about meaning and are they appropriate to the context?
- Restate the meaning back for clarification and application.
 - * How can you assure that everyone understands what community “callers” say, especially in relation to cross-cultural contexts?
 - * What are context-appropriate ways to say, “Let me see if I got this right. So, what you’re saying is ...”?

Setting your feet: Knowing yourself and adjusting to community needs

To embody a CH perspective, pullers must set their feet while staying agile. Researchers must set an active stance, ready to create socially just relationships and innovative, collaborative outcomes toward community goals. As new “pullers” for the community, researchers can no longer rely solely on their existing CV. To the community, you are just another puller. A CH perspective while setting one’s feet involves an ethic of knowing and communicating yourself transparently and acknowledges the others’ strengths and knowledges. As other TPC researchers (Bloom-Pojar & Barker, 2020; Del Hierro et al., 2019) have argued and modeled, researchers must invest the time to set their active stance properly, so they can recognize and adapt and adjust to community needs.

Arctic researchers want to connect with Arctic Indigenous communities but have continued to fail in their efforts to build meaningful-to-community connections as the IARPC report emphasized. Setting your feet with a CH perspective helps to build trust because it prepares researchers to be willing to pivot and respond to community direction. Community partners, as callers, need to be able to name the risks and other problems within a project. Despite researcher’s relatively high positionality, privilege,

and power in academic contexts, they do not have the experience or expertise to be the callers in community contexts. They are pullers.

Investing the time to know yourself sets in motion researcher's capacity to listen, learn, and adjust to the community's knowledges, skills, and self-determined goals related to the project. Setting your feet with a CH perspective helps researchers carefully consider the community's margin of maneuverability (Walton et al., 2019) in research contexts, which promotes safely communicating difficult, but necessary correctives. Researchers are often bound by academic institutional structures themselves, which affects their own margin of maneuverability to set their feet ready for socially-just, community-led research. Kramer lamented, "I keep wondering why researchers *neglect* to connect with communities in meaningful ways" (personal communication, October 03, 2022).

We offer the following suggestions to adopt a CH perspective as researchers set their feet:

- Name and respect one another's margins of maneuverability.
- How might relative positionality, privilege, and power affect everyone's ability to act in a given context and time?
- Be willing to adjust to community feedback.
 - * Are you using your training and skills to help meet the community's true needs? Or does your research only partially meet their needs?
 - * What innovation is possible from the inclusion of diverse perspectives in research?
 - * What knowledges and skills do you need to learn so you can adjust to community needs?

Pulling equally: Accepting your role and avoiding manipulation of the project

Nalukataq requires that everybody pulls equally to successfully hoist the jumper. If researchers as pullers listen to the caller and set their feet appropriately, they can understand and accept their role in the project. Pulling equally illuminates how a CH perspective in CER is embodied. Clay et al. (2022) argued that research is an embodied practice, especially so within the realm of collaborative research. They highlight how team members bring together their individual lived experiences to help make sense of, and contribute to, the group's research experience and goals. However, this embodiment must be done carefully. Simmons and Amidon (2019) have discussed how "embodiment and identity" are a primary vector in tensions related to CER. Researchers must make sure to carefully consider how and why they are pulling with the community, or else they risk perpetuating harms, such as manipulating the direction of the project toward their own convenience rather than the community's goals.

Due to the problematic history of extractive research that has systematically excluded communities from leadership and other meaningful roles in the research process, pulling *equally* could be restated as pulling *equitably*. This shift in terms highlights the need for reparative work when it comes to the harms that mainstream, colonial, white-supremacist research practices have caused. Kramer explained:

I'm continually catching myself and thinking through the different ways we all, even us Natives, continue to have colonized thinking. When working with researchers, my role is often as their trainer and mentor in working with our people in respectful ways. But I

often wonder, *why do I have to do this work on top of everything else?* At the same time, I find that it can bring a psychological transference of power that I've found healing and systematically corrective. The whole idea is that the Western-trained scientist/professor/practitioner acknowledges and actively demonstrates that the local knowledge-keeper is an *equal* in the work and a *superior* on the land. (personal communication, December 15, 2022).

Equitable "pulling" takes time to achieve together because a community's capacity to pull may change. As Kramer (personal communication, October 26, 2022) explained, "Researchers must understand that a community's capacity, and even willingness, to make decisions about participating in a project and what benefits it should bring to the community takes time, especially because of research fatigue and just being extremely busy surviving up here." Researchers must understand the capacity of communities is not static, increasing, decreasing, and shifting day to day. Community capacity can both increase and decrease. A CH perspective while pulling equitably helps with the careful maintenance, attention, and patience necessary for innovative and equitable CER. Participation in a project should help transform the community's capacity to effectively perform and participate in future projects. To help researchers pull equitably, we suggest the following prompts to guide your developing CH perspective:

- Consider how historical power relationships exist in and affect CER.
 - * How might prior experiences with researchers and institutions affect the ability of communities to trust researchers and how can you change that?
 - * How can you remain transparent with the community about your motivations and needs to avoid potentially manipulating the direction of the project?
- Remember that community partners are experts in their own communities and are essential to successful CER.
 - * What ways are you actively incorporating community partners in all phases and aspects of the research process?
 - * How are you incorporating community feedback into your research and communication design?
- Design tangible benefits for the community with the community.
 - * What does the community actually need and at what timescale?
 - * How can you include multiple, complementary community benefits into your research design?

Staying in sync: Maintaining connections and trust

A CH perspective demands that researchers stay in sync with the community in similar ways that pullers must stay in sync with the caller and one another to successfully propel the jumper. If the pullers and the caller are not in sync, the blanket will not rhythmically move up and down and the jumper will not be able to jump safely. However, even if their rhythm falls out of sync, in the spirit of *nalukataq*, it can be restored through listening to the caller, setting one's feet anew, and pulling together. Simmons and Amidon (2019) discussed how researchers and partners should remain aware of and flexible to CER's iterative process to enhance its success. The highest potential of a CER project is reached when the cadence of the partners, activities, goals, and the community all align.

A CH cadence involves evaluating a project and partnership regularly to catch issues early so that necessary adjustments are made in a timely manner. A community's capacity and needs change over time, and similarly so do partner roles and project goals. A CH perspective is an important component of evaluation and helps create space for honest feedback. Through listening to feedback humbly, trust is shared and maintained and the project's trajectory toward success is refined. Kramer (personal communication, October 31, 22) recalled receiving feedback from a village Elder that was both hard and important to hear:

In my previous work, I traveled to the villages to present and receive community feedback on a project we had been working on for a while in the region. In my last village of the project, their community's eldest Elder was there and listened gracefully. He was close to 90 and very 'old school.' He was a whaling captain and is revered in the community. He was sitting the whole time and listened attentively to all the community comments. At the very end of the meeting, he had his family members help him to stand up—because when he speaks, he's going to stand up—and he says, 'I've listened to you talk all about whatever you're doing here.' And then he simply said, 'Almost.' And that was it. Basically, he was telling us that he recognized what we had been working really hard to do. But it was still just *almost*.

Staying in sync throughout a project means being willing to receive and respond to community and partner feedback. Much like being willing and able to listen and respond to the caller or the movement of the jumper in *nalukataq* to assure safety and success, researchers, and the funders that support their research, must similarly remain nimble through adopting and practicing a CH perspective. Kramer explained why staying in sync with the community matters so much:

You start off with this idea and even if you sit and listen, even if you work hard together and try to grasp what the community is trying to say about its needs, you still might miss the mark. You still might be almost. What we need to do to prevent that almost from taking over is to continue to go back and ask the community, "Is this right?" Even deep into the project. It's hard to do in practice, because when you're applying for big grants, you have to be very specific about the different things you're going to accomplish and how and when you're going to accomplish them. You have to already know who you're going to hire, their specific qualifications, and how much it's going to cost. It's really hard to stop and say, "Actually, we need to totally rethink this." It's easier to say, "It's too late now" and keep going. But now you have a five-year project starting at almost. Think of its trajectory. This almost affects the hopeful impacts at the community level; it's actually a failure. You end up just checking boxes on a grant, saying you did this, this, this, and this, but the intention of what you tried to do in the first place isn't there because you started with almost.

To help researchers stay in sync with community partners in CER, we suggest the following prompts to guide developing a CH perspective:

- Maintain and adjust spaces for honest feedback at all stages of the research process.

- * How have you designed iteration into your research evaluation process?
- * Have there been any changes in the community's or researcher's situation, e.g., immediate needs, personnel, institutional contexts that might impact the safety of honest communication?
- Welcome critique with a good spirit.
 - * How can you honor the labor involved in giving critique? Be ready to be wrong and adjust.
 - * How did you prepare the community to give critique and expect that pivots are inherent to research. How does your response to critique reveal your respect for the community?
 - * Incorporate feedback into the project's design in meaningful ways.
 - * How does accountability to the community affect the project and your credibility with the community?

CONCLUSION

TPC, because of its focus on equipping people and organizations to act in socially just ways, is well-positioned to lead other fields toward reducing oppressive outcomes in research practices, such as CER. In other words, Arctic research needs TPC to help make Arctic CER more equitable. For example, in the Rematriation Project, we designed technical communication—in the form of CER protocols such as a memorandum of understanding (MOU)—to codify Inuit leadership and a commitment to Inuit self-determination behind all of our project's activities. These protocols were designed to be transferable to other projects that Aqqaluk Trust may undertake with future research partners and directly address a community need beyond the digital archiving goals of the Rematriation Project.

We'd like to point out that the terms of the Rematriation Project MOU required a CH perspective to enact. The MOU demanded that project activities "help develop local capacities to a point where seeking outside assistance for future digital archiving and maintenance is optional rather than necessary." This demand built an exit for researcher participation into the research design as community capacities increase. In other words, this clause builds in a "thank you; bah bye" into the project from the jump—something that likely takes a CH perspective to accept as a scholar whose expertise is often positioned in research as "necessary." Further, the MOU refined what is meant by equity in CER leadership:

The performance of this Project is based on equity in light of Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. The painful history of extractive research and community exploitation requires that the partnership take an active stance in rebalancing power between Indigenous communities and academic institutions. Therefore, decision-making processes need to be intentional with the final decision-making power ultimately residing with Aqqaluk Trust, on behalf of the Community.

This demand clearly places the project authority with the community "caller" and positions academic researchers as "pullers" who must listen to the caller as a requirement of the partnership. This is, as we have discussed, a radical departure from mainstream research practices that position academic researchers, and their goals, as the driving force in CER. A CH perspective is necessary to make that shift and truly enact a socially just CER process.

As our CH framework suggests, researchers should gain the necessary skills *prior to* engaging with a community. *Listening to*

the caller respects and submits to community leadership. Listening to community “callers” involves taking pause to consider as a “puller” how not to center academic-oriented plans and ideas and instead actively respond to community leadership. *Setting your feet* is about establishing honest connections with a community that seeks to understand the community’s self-determined goals, expert knowledges, and margin of maneuverability. This mutual understanding through connection can help researchers consider the limits of their own expertise in the scope of the community’s goals. Once researchers have developed a preliminary foundation of trust to “pull” with and for the community, they must continue to actively understand and accept their role in the project. *Pulling equally* is about working toward equity and reparation. Researchers pull equitably by accepting their connection to a history of extraction and mistrust with regards to research, so they can avoid the mistakes of this past and design tangible benefits with and for the community. Finally, these CH perspectives only work if researchers *stay in sync* with the community and that they extend their relationship long past the life of the research and grants.

We hope that we have explained the importance of embodying and pursuing a CH perspective in preparation for socially just CER. We want to emphasize that if researchers neglect to embody a CH perspective when engaging marginalized communities, they may put the community at risk and reinforce extractive research relationships that lead to harm and further mistrust. To work together toward relationships built on trust, we designed the CH framework by listening and following the regional Elders wisdom: “in humility is strength.” A CH framework is first and foremost the prerequisites necessary for designing proactive communication that builds and maintains trust through connections—truly just connections—between communities and researchers. *Nalukataq* embodies the Iñupiat Iłitqusiat. These values, knowledges, and practices are necessary in addressing the weakness of white-settler, colonialist research. “Humility is strength” equips researchers to recognize the strength in listening to and being led by communities.

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