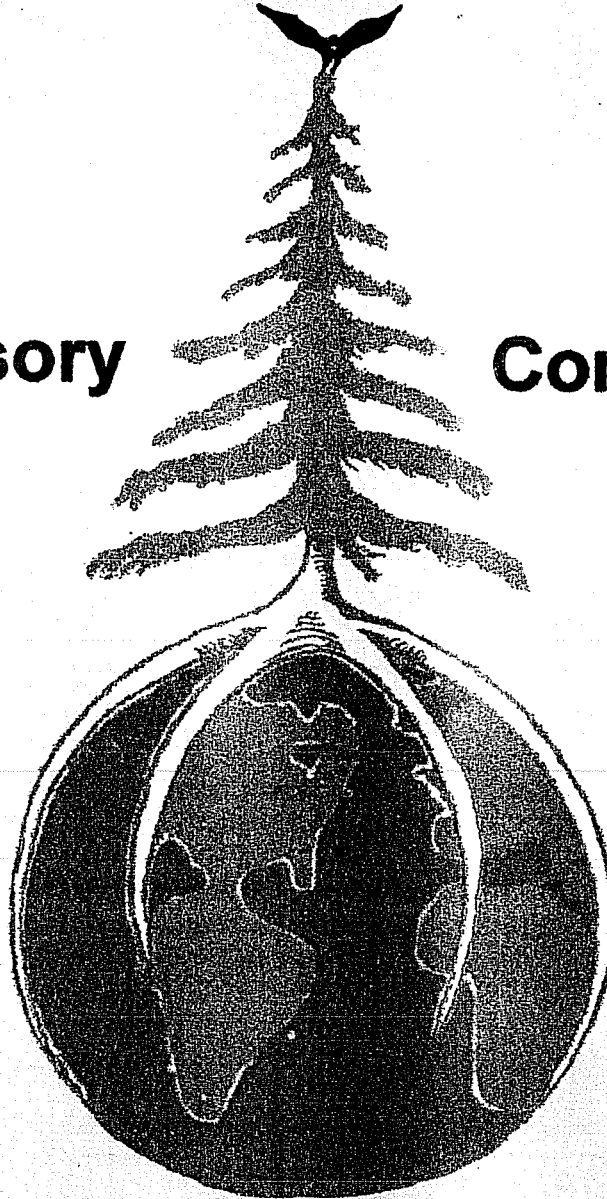


Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment

Research

Advisory

Committee



**Protocol for Review of Environmental and
Scientific Research Proposals**

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PREFACE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES

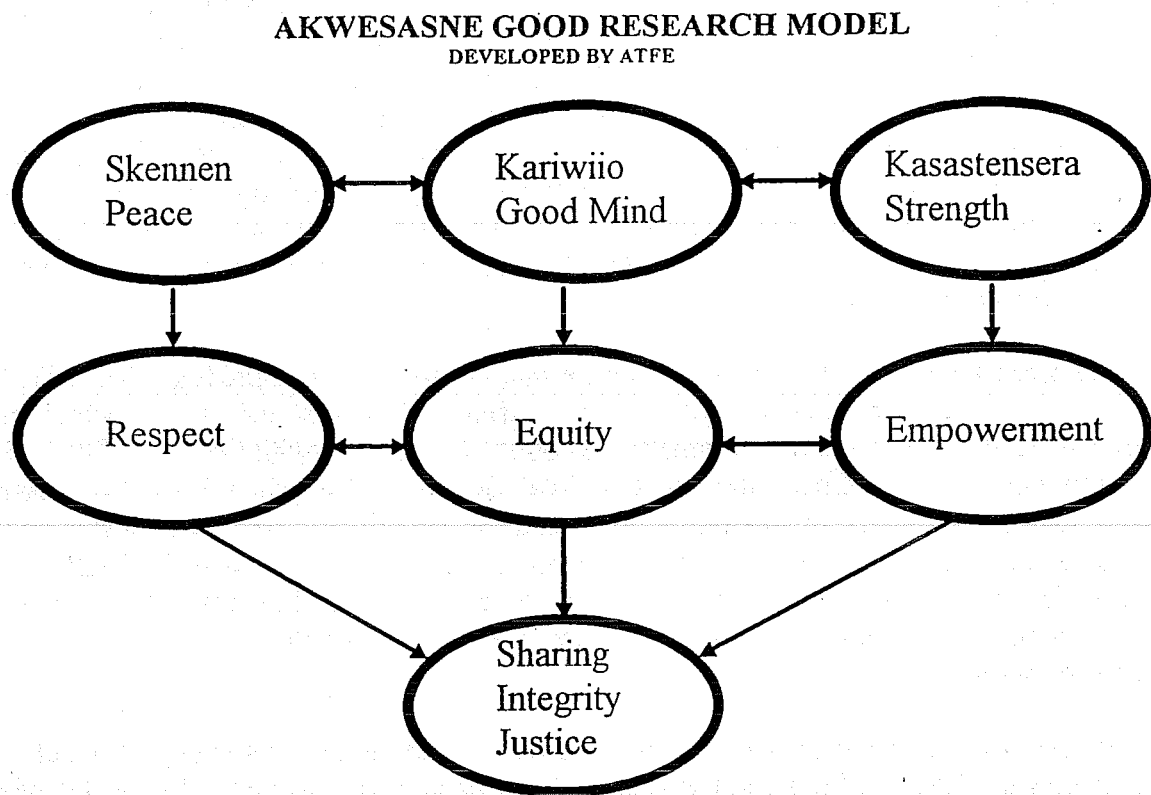
The principles of skennen, kariwii and kasastensera serve as the foundation and guiding force for the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment (ATFE). Since the beginning of time, our Creator has told our people to strive for peace and as individuals, communities and Nations, we must constantly strive to talk, work, live and be at peace. Skennen (peace) is more than just the absence of conflict or war and is based on spiritual, social and political foundations. Peace has been defined as "the active striving of humans for the purpose of establishing universal justice... True peace is the product of a unified people on the path of Righteousness and Reason - the ability to enact the principles of Peace through education, public opinion and political and when necessary, military unity. It is the product of a spiritually conscious society using its abilities at reason."¹

When we work for peace, we develop a good mind, a good way of thinking. Kariwii (good word) refers to "the shared ideology of the people using their purest and most unselfish minds. It occurs when the people put their minds and emotions in harmony with the flow of the universe and the intentions of the Good Mind or the Great Creator. The principles of Righteousness demand that all thoughts of prejudice, privilege or superiority be swept away and that recognition be given to the reality that the creation is intended for the benefit of all equally - even the birds and animals, the trees and the insects, as well as the humans...Reason is seen as the skill which humans must be encouraged to acquire in order that the objectives of justice may be attained and no one's rights abused."¹

When we work for peace and a good mind, we develop kasastensera (strength). Strength flows from the power of the good mind to use rational thinking and persuasion to channel the inherent good will of humans to work towards peace, justice and unity to prevent the abuse of human beings and mother earth.

¹ Akwesasne Notes, Mohawk Nation. Basic Call to Consciousness. Book Publishing Co. Summertown, TN 1978.

Figure 1: Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment Guiding Principles.²



² Concept developed through the ideas and practices of Henry Lickers and Brenda LaFrance, members of the ATFE.

PURPOSE OF RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE REVIEW PROCESS

The Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment (ATFE) has established a Research Advisory Committee (RAC) to review and comment on all proposals that involve environmental and/or scientific research to be conducted in the Mohawk Nation community of Akwesasne. Due to the increased number of research projects being proposed by scientists, it has become necessary to establish guidelines to protect the community of Akwesasne and its future generations. Towards this end, the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment must be consulted by all projects or activities involving environmental and/or scientific research. Researchers need to have the opportunity to deal with a community entity in order to be respectful and not take advantage of intra-tribal differences. In addition, it is important for scientists to recognize the need for community empowerment, control of the research process and ownership of data and information.

This review process should not be viewed in a negative way or be seen as an impediment to research. It has been developed to serve as a guide to improve relations between the community of Akwesasne and scientists/researchers and to promote collaboration within a framework of mutual trust and cooperation. A good research agreement will be developed to ensure that studies proceed in a manner that is both culturally sensitive and relevant to the participants and community. Our three main guiding principles, skennen, kariwio and kasastensera, as well as the behaviors that flow from these principles, respect, equity and empowerment, will serve as the criteria of this review process. The Research Advisory Committee will help to ensure that the proposed research benefits the community, gives the people of Akwesasne an opportunity to be involved in decision making processes and empowers those involved through education, training and/or authorship. This agreement will also ensure that finances, personnel and power are shared between the community and researchers. Finally, the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment is responsible for insuring that proposed research protects the environmental, natural and cultural resources of Akwesasne.

ROLE OF AKWESASNE TASK FORCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT (ATFE) AND ITS RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RAC)

The Akwesasne Task Force on the environment (ATFE) is a community based organization founded to conserve, preserve, protect and restore the environment, natural and cultural resources within the territory of Akwesasne. The Task Force works to fulfill the responsibilities that we as Onkwehon:we people have to the natural world to promote the health and survival of the sacred web of life for the next seven generations. The ATFE includes community members who reside in all regions of Akwesasne.

The objectives of the ATFE include serving the people of Akwesasne by acting as environmental representatives to external agencies and acting to establish partnerships with educational and environmental organizations to assist the community in developing and implementing strategies for environmental protection.

The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) has been authorized and resourced by the ATFE to review environmental and scientific research protocols and proposals and submit recommendations regarding these proposals to the Task Force at large. At any given time, a minimum of 5 individuals will be asked to serve on this committee by a consensus decision of the members of the ATFE. It will be up to the members of the ATFE as a whole to decide if the proposed research will be supported or not. Approval by the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment means that a community based organization has reviewed the research proposal and agreed that this project appears to potentially benefit the community and/or environment of Akwesasne without causing obvious or substantial harm to the environment, community and individual persons residing in Akwesasne.

DEFINITIONS

Akwesasne Community:

The Akwesasne community includes Mohawk and other individuals, families, clans, governments and people residing in the Mohawk Nation community of Akwesasne.

Empowerment:

Empowerment is defined as a sharing of power and the result of a good research agreement developed by both the community and the researcher. Each of the participants feel that their needs are being met and that their credibility is increasing. Partnership and responsibility continue to grow as more and more respect and equity enter the agreement. The application of the research as a useful instrument of the community is balanced with the researchers need for good science. Empowerment also means that authorship must be shared between the community and the researcher. While this is sometimes difficult, the increase in empowerment and credibility is very beneficial to the good research agreement.

Equity:

Equity is defined as a sharing of resources. Both the researchers and the community must bring equity to the agreement. Each of the participants in a good research agreement must evaluate this equity in relationship to the research. Finance or money is only one form of equity. Community knowledge, networks, personnel and political/social power are other forms of equity useful to the project. Each of these commodities have value and must be shared between the researchers and community if a good agreement is to be formulated. It will be necessary to continuously review equity over the duration of the agreement.

Good Research Agreement:

A good research agreement is developed between researchers and the community of Akwesasne when it promotes collaboration within a framework of mutual trust and cooperation. This agreement will result in shared power, shared resources and mutual understanding and will ensure that studies proceed in a manner that is both culturally sensitive, relevant and beneficial to the participants and community of Akwesasne. See Figure 2.

Research:

Research includes but is not limited to : agricultural, behavioral, biogenetic, medical, behavioral, botanical, ecological, environmental, ethnobotanical, neurological, psychological, toxicological or other scientific studies.

Respect:

In order to develop a good research agreement, the researchers and the community must generate respect for each other. Respect is generated by understanding each others social, political and cultural structures. The researchers and the community can not assume that they believe in the same things or share the same goals and expectations. Communication must work both ways in order that a good research agreement be generated. Cultural sensitivity training for the researchers and community awareness presentations will help develop a mutual understanding of the research process. Definitions and assumptions must be clarified and questioned by each side. The community and the researchers must listen to each other with clean, clear ears. Consensus and a mediation process will be used to develop the procedures which can be honored by both the researchers and community.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Time Frame:

Researchers must begin working with the ATFE in the earliest stages of planning their proposals. Depending on the nature of the proposed project, researchers are advised to allow sufficient time for community members to thoroughly review and understand all aspects of the study, ask questions and resolve differences. Even the simplest of proposals will need more than a month for review, since the ATFE meets monthly. Because research is a cooperative venture, it is not wise to wait until the last minute to write a grant application and assume that the community of Akwesasne will automatically cooperate.

Figure 2: The "Good Research Agreement" is generated by a balance of:

	Respect	Equity	Empowerment
Tools:	Understanding	Finances	Application
	Communication	Knowledge	Authorship
	Consensus	Networks	Credibility
	Mediation	Personnel	Partnership
	Honor	Social power	Responsibility

Format:

The Research Advisory Committee requests that a short (maximum 5 pages, single sided) synopsis of the project be submitted. A full length proposal should be submitted as a supplement, but the requested summary must be able to stand on its own. The following information must be included in any materials that request approval or support letters for research projects:

1. Statement of the Problem/Research Question

Briefly describe the problem you are addressing with your proposed research, specific questions related to this problem and the theoretical rationale behind the question. If you have specific hypotheses, please briefly state them.

2. Intent/Benefit to the Community of Akwesasne

Clearly outline and discuss the intent of the research and the benefit(s) that the project, research or activity will have to the community. What are the anticipated consequences or results/outcomes of the project? What groups will be affected and what groups will benefit? In what ways will these groups benefit?

3. Method

Briefly describe the procedure for the collection of all data to be used in your study. Include a description of subjects, settings, proposed procedure and the nature of the data to be collected.

4. Confidentiality

Describe how confidentiality will be protected. Indicate the circumstances in which the obligations of the researcher will constitute a breach of confidentiality. Describe how individual participants will be informed of the degree of confidentiality that will be maintained throughout the study. It should be remembered that unless otherwise specified, only aggregate data, not individual data, shall be published or released to the general public. All individual identifiers such as names, addresses and phone numbers must be kept confidential and no sale or transfer of databases outside the specific research project shall be allowed. You must state in your summary if the community of Akwesasne will be identified in any data released to the general public.

5. Disposition of the data

Describe how individual participants will be informed of how data will be used. Remember that both the community and the participants must clearly understand what the researcher plans to do with the information that is collected. Describe plans to provide individual participants with their own personal results. In addition, describe how the community at large will be educated or empowered by this study. Describe how frequently and in what manner aggregate data and progress reports will be shared with the Research Advisory Committee. Describe communication strategies that will be used to present aggregate data to the community at large. Remember, data must be shared with the community of Akwesasne before it is shared outside the community.

6. Risks

Describe any potential legal, financial, social, physical or psychological risks that are anticipated in this research. Describe any risks of deleterious impact on the cultural, social, economic or political well-being of the community. The assessment of risk will also address the steps that will be taken to minimize, ameliorate or repair the problem in the event that actual harm is caused to the community of Akwesasne. Explain how potential risks will be explained to participants and how they are clearly justified by the potential benefits of the research.

7. Funding/Budget

If this study is funded by any public or private granting sources, please provide a full reference. If you are currently seeking funding, please list all funding agencies for which you are sending proposals. Researchers are advised to budget funding to cover cultural sensitivity training and to provide adequate resources to cover community education and outreach efforts.

8. Cultural Sensitivity Training

So that researchers are better prepared to work in our community, all principal investigators, researchers, graduate students and any others involved in data collection will be required to undergo cultural sensitivity training which will be provided at the researcher's expense by the North American Indian Travelling College. Costs will be determined based on the scope of the project.

9. Equity

The proposal must demonstrate how the participants and the community at large will be given fair and appropriate return. Just compensation or fair return includes but is not limited to: obtaining copies of the research findings, authorship, co-authorship or acknowledgment, royalties, fair monetary compensation, copyright, patent, trademark, compensation for expenses incurred in reviewing/advising researchers, coverage of training/education or outreach expenses or other forms of compensation.

10. Empowerment

The proposal must address mechanisms for informed consent which may be required from individual participants, families, clans or the governments of Akwesasne. Please list the agencies, professionals, government representatives or individuals within the community with which you have previously discussed this proposal and whether or not they have given their support.

Describe how individuals and community members will be empowered by the research process through employment, training or outreach efforts. Native American preference must be given in employment and training in all phases of the project or activity, especially in the on reservation phases. The order of priorities in hiring shall be:

(1) Akwesasne Tribal members; (2) Native American or Alaskan Native people generally; (3) local residents.

11. Intellectual property rights and review of product or research results

Discuss the plans (pre, during and post-project) for publication or commercialization of the research findings. How will the community share in the authorship of publications or commercialization of the research findings? How will the community have access to the project, research data or findings for their own use? Researchers must inform the Research Advisory Committee of journals, publishing houses or conferences that they plan to print or present the results of their studies before papers are submitted or presented. The proposal must demonstrate a process whereby the Research Advisory Committee and the Akwesasne Task Force at large will have an opportunity to review and critique the results of all studies before any publication, presentation, news conferences or release of data to the general public. Researchers shall be responsible for addressing, correcting and satisfying the concerns of the Task Force in both drafts and final reports, papers or data summaries before they are released to the general public.

12. Data Ownership/Archive

The Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment reserves the right to require deposit of raw materials or data, working papers or product in a tribally designated repository, with specific safeguards to preserve confidentiality. Duplicates of data or split samples may be required to be stored in such a local archive.

REVIEW PROCESS

All requested research summaries and support documents should be sent to:

Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment
Research Advisory Committee
PO Box 992
Hogansburg, NY 13655

The Research Advisory Committee of the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment shall review the materials that are submitted and either:

1. Return the proposal to the researcher with requests for more information or with suggestions for clarification or change; or
2. Send the proposal and request on to the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment to be placed as an agenda item at their next monthly meeting with a recommendation for approval or disapproval; or
3. Consult with other community professionals, technical experts or specialists for a second evaluation before sending recommendations to the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment.

The review process is complete when the researcher receives a letter of notification from the Chairperson of the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment. Upon approval, principal investigators, researchers, graduate students and any others involved in data collection must undergo cultural sensitivity training at the investigators' expense before any research is begun in the community. The Research Advisory Committee expects periodic progress reports and will use these to update the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment on the status of the project.

Modifications of an approved project

If the researcher wishes to make substantial changes in his or her research protocol after receiving approval from the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment, he or she must submit a summary of the proposed modifications to the Research Advisory Committee. Modifications in the data collection procedures must be approved by the Research Advisory Committee and must not be implemented until the researcher receives written approval to make the changes from the Chairperson of the Akwesasne Task Force on the environment.

Continuation Review

If a research project received approval by the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment, the approval remains in effect for the period of time specified in the research agreement unless substantial changes are made in the research protocol. At the end of the approval period, the researcher must submit a letter in writing which summarizes the status of the project (complete, incomplete, discontinued), any unanticipated problems that occurred during the data collection phase of the project and a time schedule for completion of all work, including community education/outreach, related to the project. If the project is incomplete, the researcher must also request in writing an additional approval period for the data collection phase of the project.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

The Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment reserves the right to:

- a) Withdraw consent to use or release information and/or prevent the publication of data which is unauthorized, sensitive, misrepresents or stereotypes Mohawk people or will harm the health, safety or welfare of the Mohawk people of Akwesasne or their environment.
- b) Deny researchers the opportunity to conduct research in the community of Akwesasne. In addition, other researchers or scientists from the same research institution may be denied any future access to the community.
- c) Withdraw approval for projects. When this is done, the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment will explain the rationale for withdrawing approval and explain why this project or the release of data is deemed to be harmful to individuals or the community as a whole. In the case of withdrawal of approval by the community, all information and copies of data must be returned to the community. If a project is terminated, the research organization must provide just compensation to any field staff or member of the Akwesasne Task Force on the Environment for their time and efforts spent related to the research project.

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