

## Shared Ideals, But Persistent Barriers: Improving Tribal-University Research Engagement to Strengthen Native Nation Building and Rural Development<sup>☆</sup>

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**ABSTRACT** Research partnerships between Tribal Nations and rural colleges and universities can support rural development and strengthen Tribal Nation building through reclamation of economic, political, cultural, and social affairs. However, Tribal Nation–University relationships have received little attention in rural sociology. While scholars identify best practices for research engagement in light of colonial harms, the ideal visions that Tribally and university-affiliated people have for research partnerships and the barriers to achieving those ideals are poorly understood. Without identifying these visions and barriers, we risk making wrong assumptions about each party's needs and cannot implement appropriate policies. Semi-structured interviews with Tribally-affiliated ( $n=20$ ) and university-affiliated ( $n=20$ ) people in rural southeastern Idaho suggest, contrary to literature on best practices for collaborative research, that participants in both groups viewed what we term “Tribally-responsive research engagement” as ideal, though few projects met this goal. Tribally-responsive research directly addressed Tribal priorities but did not necessarily involve close collaboration. The University's failure to acknowledge past or colonial harms, university-affiliated researchers' historicization of those harms, and negative Native student experiences reinforced distrust, limiting desired research engagement. In sum, Tribally-responsive research engagement could strengthen Native Nation building, but requires universities to acknowledge harms, create more welcoming campus environments, and prioritize Tribal benefits in research.

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## Introduction

The history of Tribal Nation-University research engagement has largely been extractive, with research benefiting universities and often entailing unethical practices that devalue Indigenous peoples' intellectual labor and property (David-Chavez and Gavin 2018; Hart and Sobraske 2003; Martin and Mirraboopa 2003). Linda Tuhiwai Smith's highly influential book, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999, 2021), set the stage for a broader conversation about the entrenchment of colonialism in the research enterprise and about past and ongoing harms that research enacts on Indigenous Peoples (Adams and Faulkhead 2012; McGregor 2018; Tuck and Yang 2012). In the United States and elsewhere, racist colonial structures have sanctioned state-sponsored violence and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples (McKay, Vinyeta, and Norgaard 2020), including exploitation through research (e.g., Ali et al. 2021). Harmful research models have largely involved academic researchers extracting information or resources from communities through projects prioritizing researchers' interests over community needs (David-Chavez and Gavin 2018; Smith 2021; Tilley 2017). In addition, universities, as part of ongoing settler-colonialism (Wolfe 2006), have claimed authority over what counts as valid knowledge and knowledge production processes, marginalizing other ways of knowing and doing (Bell and Lewis 2023; Dawson 2020; Jaffe 2017). These past and ongoing colonial harms, including the benefit universities extract from operating on Indigenous ancestral, often forcibly-ceded, lands create distrust between academic and Indigenous communities.

A movement toward decolonizing higher education and research practices entails reevaluating approaches to Indigenous research engagement. In part, scholars who have initiated these conversations argue that, while research has been a site of colonization and harm, it can also serve as a site of Indigenous resistance, self-determination, and cultural renewal (McGregor 2018; Smith 2021). Decolonized methodologies oppose typical Western, euro-centric values and epistemologies related to "research," which Smith (1999) dubs "the dirtiest word" to Indigenous Peoples. Through centering and uplifting Indigenous worldviews and needs, and practicing culturally relevant and appropriate research methodologies, such approaches can serve Indigenous peoples and nations.

One way research can do this is by producing outcomes aligning with Native Nation building (Brayboy et al. 2012). Native Nation building is "the process by which a Native Nation strengthens its own capacity for effective and culturally relevant self-government and for self-determined and sustainable community development" (Native Nations Institute n.d.). It refers to "the political, legal, spiritual, educational, and economic processes through which Indigenous peoples engage in order to build local capacity to address their educational, health, legal, economic, nutritional, relational, and spatial needs" (Brayboy, Castagno, and Solyom 2014). Native Nation building involves individuals serving their community and is deeply interconnected with Tribal sovereignty and economic development (Brayboy et al. 2012). Research that helps build local capacity, directly and/or indirectly, aligns with Native Nation building and associated economic and community development of Tribal Nations. As opposed to taking a deficit-based

approach to thinking about issues like poverty or educational attainment on rural reservations, Tribal Nation building centers political solutions and effective governance (Cornell and Kalt 1998). Deficit models, also termed “deficit thinking” or “deficit frameworks,” in research are based on assumptions that individual and community challenges are rooted in those communities’ shortcomings, or they focus exclusively on those challenges instead of strengths and resilience, often reinforcing stereotypes (Davis and Museus 2019).

Sovereignty, self-determination, and autonomy are central to Native Nation building, as Indigenous Peoples (re)claiming of identity, space, and ways of being and doing constitute part of such nationhood (Brayboy et al. 2012). While some scholarship on Native Nation building has focused on Tribal economic development in relation to effective Tribal governance (Begay, Cornell, and Kalt 1998; Cornell and Kalt 2010; Kalt 2007), other scholars of Native Nation building describe not only this need for increased economic self-sufficiency but also the foundational roles of Indigenous knowledge systems and a collective sovereignty of the mind to envision transformative processes in different Indigenous communities (Champagne 2002; Coffey and Tsosie 2001). Native Nation building, in this broader sense, entails culturally responsive education, which supports Indigenous student achievement and therefore, capacity for change (Castagno 2021). Further, postsecondary education honoring Indigenous knowledge and encouraging Native students to give back to their peoples and homelands also directly operationalizes Native Nation building by strengthening Native students’ internal capacity for community changemaking (Thomas and Spang Gion 2021).

One of the first barriers to decolonizing research in alignment with Native Nation building may be relational dynamics between institutions of higher education and Tribal Nations (Stewart-Ambo 2021; Thomas and Spang Gion 2021). These dynamics are especially relevant in rural places in the United States, as the majority of Native peoples live in rural and small-town areas (Deweese and Marks 2017) and attend rural-serving postsecondary educational institutions (Gilbert 2000; Koricich et al. 2022). Thus, rural higher education institutions play a key role in Native peoples’ educational achievement and Native Nation building (Brayboy et al. 2012; Nelson and Tachine 2018). To support Native Nation building, university-sponsored researchers need to respect Tribal sovereignty, build Tribal economic, political, social, and/or cultural capacity, and create spaces for transformation and real-world action (Smith 2021).

The Indigenous/Tribal-university research engagement literature tends to focus on best practices for responsible research, such as taking the time to establish respectful and genuine relationships before starting research (Adams et al. 2014; Baldwin, Johnson, and Benally 2009; Ball and Janyst 2008; de Leeuw, Cameron, and Greenwood 2012; Hill et al. 2020; Matson et al. 2021); working together on each stage of the project (Adams and Faulkhead 2012; Baldwin et al. 2009; Claw et al. 2018; Harding et al. 2012; Hill et al. 2020; LaVeaux and Christopher 2009; Matson et al. 2021; Norström et al. 2020); centering Indigenous epistemologies, knowledges, and methodologies (Arsenault et al. 2018; LaVeaux and Christopher 2009; Reo et al. 2017); respecting Indigenous sovereignty and governance institutions (Reo et al. 2017; Shaw, Gagnon, and Ravindran 2022;

Williams, Umangay, and Brant 2020); and ensuring the project provides direct community benefit (Adams et al. 2014; Ball and Janyt 2008). While these best practices are widely accepted tenets of responsible research, little research attention has been placed on the lived experiences of researchers navigating these spaces, nor how those experiences might act to facilitate or impede implementing Native Nation building. Further, given these research best practices are infrequently met (David-Chavez and Gavin 2018; Latulippe and Klenk 2020), there is a need to understand why these ideals are not attained, as well as to closely evaluate how well best practices and ideals align with actual community priorities and capacities (Adams and Faulkhead 2012; Castleden, Morgan, and Lamb 2012). Doing so requires case study research identifying barriers preventing building trust and connected relationships between Tribal Nations and universities.

Our project seeks to understand the research relationship between the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes (SBT) and Idaho State University (ISU) in rural, southeastern Idaho as a first step in building a more respectful and reciprocal relationship between the two entities, moving their research relationship toward meeting the goals of Native Nation building. While this project did not take a fully decolonized methodological approach, we intentionally adopted what Wilson (2001) describes as relational accountability, or “answering to all your relations” (177). Relational accountability asks researchers to fulfill and be responsible for their relationships with the world around them, including their research partners. It asks that we question how we can meet our responsibilities toward the world and others as part of the research process and positions fulfilling those responsibilities as the end goal of research rather than just producing knowledge (Wilson 2001). Thus, we strove to conduct our research as guided and supported by the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, whose lands we conducted this project on and to whom our research refers and is responsible. To meet our relational obligations, we needed to go beyond the typical end points of western research paradigms to share the results of our project widely and be active advocates for changing the research relationship we describe in this paper. Following this approach, we begin by telling the story of how this project began and for what purpose, describing our backgrounds and motivations, and locating ourselves within the project, thus holding ourselves relationally accountable to the ideas and aims we hold, as well as those of institutions and people we write about. Throughout this project, we have actively upheld our responsibility to the project participants and the SBT community, whom this research project is meant to serve, through taking the time to build relationships, seek advice, and to adjust our approach based on their needs. As a way to situate ourselves in the research, we, the authors, offer brief positionality statements to provide the reader context and demonstrate our commitment to practicing relational accountability (Wilson 2001).

[Herkshan, L. J.], I am an enrolled citizen of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes, and descendant of the Modoc, Tohono O’Odham, and Eastern Shoshone Nations, with some Mexican and settler ancestry. I am a mother, daughter, granddaughter, niece, auntie, partner, and many things to many people. I did not have the privilege of growing up on my own Tribal homelands with immediate access to my culture, but I have always had a strong connection to them through my families. My ‘formal’ education is in the social sciences and has been completed through Idaho State University, a predominantly white institution. My research interests revolve

around supporting Tribal Nation building through a diversity of approaches. I am involved with this project to continue working with and in my community and to address past and ongoing harm in academia, and improve the reality of current and future Native/Shoshone-Bannock students and researchers at ISU. Because of my positions in my community and higher education, I act in a role of advocacy and pursuing change through supporting Native students, Tribal sovereignty, and Tribal self-determination.

[Hart-Fredeluces, G. M.], I am a white woman of western European settler ancestry who grew up in Oregon and North Carolina. My academic work has focused on plant demography and Indigenous stewardship of wild-gathered, culturally significant plants. I came to ISU as a postdoc with an interest in developing projects of benefit to the SBT. I became involved in this project because I wanted to improve my own thinking and practice as a researcher, to improve the SBT-ISU relationship, and because I wanted to better understand and be part of reconciliation processes for past and ongoing harms of colonialism in a university context.

[Redd, E. A.], I am a white, queer, disabled female from a multi-ethnic family with origins in both colonizer and colonized communities. As a linguistic anthropologist, I am keenly aware of the problematic history of my discipline and the past and ongoing harms inflicted upon Indigenous populations and individuals, often viewed as research subjects instead of knowledge keepers and builders. My own research aims to center and amplify the voices of Indigenous communities and scholars and to support ethical research collaborations and decolonized methodologies. I came to this project through a desire to support both Native communities in elevating their status in their research relationships and non-Native academic researchers in revising research power dynamics through understanding of the contemporary impacts of historical (and not so historical) paradigms.

[Tso, T. J.], I am an enrolled member of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes located on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation in southeastern Idaho. I am also part of the Eastern Shoshone and Navajo Tribes. I live in Chubbuck, ID, on the southern border of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. I have been fortunate enough to have continuously resided on the ancestral homelands of the Shoshone people. I initially grew up off the reservation in Provo, UT. I would spend my summer breaks on the Wind River Indian Reservation located in Fort Washakie, Wyoming, with my maternal grandparents. My family and I moved from Provo, UT, to Fort Washakie, WY to care for my aging grandparents. They helped introduce me to the Shoshone culture and language while stressing the importance of western education while not forgetting about the culture. I am pursuing my bachelor's degree in Political Science with a minor in American Indian studies at Idaho State University. I became involved in this research project when the team sought undergraduate students who were Shoshone-Bannock Tribal members to assist in research. Before this project, I had no formal research experience and have learned much that I have utilized in other academic works and in my professional life. It was a great honor to be included in this project since I am a member of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe. More Native Americans must not only take part in formal research projects, but lead them and be given credit for them.

[Burnham, M.], I am a white male of western settler colonial ancestry and grew up in the eastern United States. My academic work is focused on human-environment relationships and questions how humans are affected by and respond to social and environmental change. While at Idaho State University, I became aware of my own lack of knowledge about how to engage in authentic partnerships with SBT and other Tribal Nations and, more generally, Indigenous knowledge systems and the history of academic research on and with Indigenous communities. I am involved in this project to improve my own thinking and practice about how to appropriately and meaningfully partner with Tribal communities to conduct Tribally-responsive research and improve Native student research experiences at Idaho State University.

In this article, stories, connections to land, personal experiences, and the goal of being accountable to the people to whom this research is responsible to inform how this project developed and our data was collected and analyzed. In contrast to this approach, western science privileges objectivity, logic, rationality, and the ability to measure and verify observable phenomena, often rejecting the integration of spirituality in research. Indigenous epistemologies emphasize holistic learning and intelligence based on relationships with people, animals, plants, land, and spirituality. Western science regards knowledge as a ‘thing’ to possess and/or gain through experimentation rather than an understanding passed through storytelling, connected to actions, experiences, and relationships (McGregor 2012).

Our project began in 2019, born out of GHF’s desire to understand the nature of past research engagement between the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and Idaho State University and to determine how research could best support Tribal needs and priorities. The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes are a federally recognized, sovereign nation. Their original homelands span the Rocky Mountain West and current Fort Hall Indian Reservation lands lie in rural southeastern Idaho. The Tribes self-govern through a seven-member council responsible for decision-making and oversight, economic development, health, education, law enforcement, and judicial services. Equally important, the Tribes work with and within their communities to provide and preserve their culture and traditions. About thirteen-and-a-half miles south of Fort Hall, within the original 1.8 million-acre reservation boundaries, sits ISU, a public research institution. Formerly known as the Academy of Idaho, ISU was founded in 1901, a year after the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes were forced to cede over a half million acres to accommodate the growing city of Pocatello and the Union Pacific Railroad Company. Born in this tumultuous history, the university’s relationship with the Tribes has been challenging at best, extractive at worst, and, overall, a continuous area of interest for both entities. In 2019, a new Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed with the intention of strengthening the SBT-ISU relationship. Out of the new MOA, the ISU Tribal-University Advisory Board (TUAB) was formed, chartered with the task of enacting the MOA’s goals and principles. Principle four of the MOA states ISU and the Tribes will “proactively strengthen the relationships to improve and enrich the quality of educational services, research, and economic development opportunities provided to and by the Tribes and ISU.” (Idaho State University n.d.). While this research was not developed to specifically address the needs of the MOA and therefore

does not address educational services or economic development directly, it does support ISU's commitment to strengthening research relationships and the overall SBT-ISU relationship. Strengthening the research relationship does, however, indirectly strengthen ISU faculty and administration's ability to provide quality education to Native and non-Native students by highlighting the need to include Native students in research and to educate faculty on sustainable Native-engaged research. Further, Tribally-responsive research has the potential to support Tribal capacity building and, therefore, economic opportunities.

Initially, GHF spent time with university- and Tribally-affiliated individuals to better understand the research partnership history and relational context and conducted web and literature searches of past research projects involving both entities. At a TUAB meeting where GHF and MB reported their interest in a project on SBT-ISU engagement, LJH and EAR expressed interest in collaborating. From those conversations, our research team was created, and later included TT, who worked on a resultant workshop series. Through this study, we interviewed 40 participants involved in or having knowledge of the research relationship between the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes and Idaho State University (the SBT-ISU research relationship) about dimensions of research engagement between the two entities over time. We asked: (1) How do participants describe the meaning and purpose of research? (2) How do participants envision the ideal research relationship between SBT and ISU? and (3) What are the barriers and opportunities to achieving that vision?

Our data analysis revealed that SBT participants viewed research both as having the potential to continue to extract Native knowledge and resources, as well as to strengthen SBT Nation building. Research supporting Nation building was a shared ideal vision across both groups for engagement. This shared ideal vision involved the Tribes determining the topical focus of partnered projects and also deciding on their level of engagement based on their own priorities and capacities—what we term 'Tribally-responsive' research. Tribally-responsive research would provide direct benefits to the Tribes according to self-identified needs, therefore, potentially addressing past harms. Tribally-responsive research could involve Tribal and outside research partners working together through each stage of a project, similar to as described in the coproduction literature (Norström et al. 2020), or, given limited Tribal capacity, might not involve close collaboration. Whether it involves working closely together or not, this type of research provides direct benefits to Tribes. Participants rarely described indigenous-led research as the ideal, likely because participants were focused on the need to build further research capacity before broader adoption of Indigenous-led research would be feasible. Finally, though described as ideal, we found that Tribally-responsive research was rarely practiced or experienced by interviewees who participated in joint SBT-ISU projects.

Distrust of the university based on past and ongoing harms, as well as on negative Native student experiences on campus, challenged the creation of Tribally-responsive research partnerships. Participants in both groups recognized that Native students sometimes felt unwelcome on campus and acknowledged past and ongoing harms as barriers to successful partnerships. Idaho State University interviewees differed, though, from SBT in commonly discussing these harms as

historical context rather than as pressing current issues that needed redressing. Our findings suggest that achieving Tribally-responsive research engagement and fostering a sense of belonging among Native students in the university setting are mutually supportive goals; both will strengthen the SBT-ISU research relationship and support SBT Nation building. Getting there will require meaningful acknowledgement of and actions addressing harms, such as increasing Native visual and pedagogical representation on campus and rewarding research that provides direct benefits to Tribal Nations.

### Methods

To conduct this research, we obtained permission through a formal resolution (FHBC-2020-0644) from the Fort Hall Tribal Business Council, the SBT governing body. Prior to obtaining this resolution, the project was vetted by the SBT's research working group, who recommended the project to the Tribal Business Council. The project was also approved by the **Idaho State University** Institutional Review Board (IRB-FY2020-66) and the **Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board (NPAIHB)** IRB (1630964-3). We obtained NPAIHB IRB approval at the suggestion of the SBT research working group as this IRB is commonly used by SBT and is specifically focused on research with Indigenous Peoples.

We conducted semi-structured interviews with 40 people involved in research partnerships between SBT and ISU or who were knowledgeable about them because of their job duties. Participants who had been involved in research partnerships included university faculty and researchers, current or former ISU students, Tribal department managers and staff, as well as Tribal community members. Participants who were knowledgeable about the research relationship because of their job duties included Tribal leaders as well as Tribal and university program coordinators. Interviews took place between December 2019 and September 2022. To identify and recruit participants, we combined targeted and chain-referral sampling (Tracy 2019). To construct our initial interviewee list, we conducted a systematic literature review, creating a list of all publications including authors affiliated with both ISU and SBT. Because partnered projects may not always lead to partnered authorship, we also searched for any publications with ISU-affiliated authors focused on or mentioning sponsorship by the Shoshone or Bannock. Our search included theses and dissertations from ISU that focused on the Shoshone, Bannock, or *Neve* Peoples. We also included people known to have been involved in research projects involving both ISU and SBT and/or suggested by the SBT research working group. Additionally, we asked interviewees to suggest potential interviewees and about additional unpublished partnered projects.

We interviewed 20 university-affiliated people and 20 Tribally-affiliated people. Eighteen participants identified as male and 22 as female. Eighteen participants were Shoshone-Bannock Tribal citizens. Throughout this article, the term "Tribally-affiliated" means the participant is connected to the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes through either citizenship or employment. Interviews averaged about one hour in length and were conducted virtually over Zoom, with the exception of two interviews conducted in-person due to participant preference. As a show of appreciation, the research team offered small thank you gifts to participants. We

recorded each interview, transcribed them using Otter.ai, and had research assistants correct transcripts prior to analysis. Interview questions focused on understanding the types of partnered research projects over time, the levels of Tribal citizens' engagement and interviewees' involvement, views of institutions' overall relationship, perceptions of the meaning and purpose of research, visions for future SBT-ISU research partnerships, and barriers to achieving such partnerships. To understand participants' perceptions of these topics, we posed questions such as: "How would you describe the relationship between the Shoshone-Bannock and Idaho State University?"; "When you hear the word research, what do you think of?"; and "What do you think would be the ideal research relationship between ISU and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes?"

Our data analysis followed the Noticing, Collecting, and Thinking method (Friese 2019). We developed a codebook of deductive codes aligned with our research questions with themes from the literature on responsible Tribal-university research partnerships, including relationship building, research sovereignty, decision-making power, Tribal benefit, trust, leadership, worldviews, and epistemology (Arsenault et al. 2018; Matson et al. 2021; Reo et al. 2017). EAR led the team in creating an initial codebook. LJH and GHF coded interviews in Atlas.ti using these deductive codes, while also allowing emergence of inductive codes not already captured in the original codebook. LJH and GHF wrote memos while coding containing observations of emerging patterns and connections among concepts central to this paper, including past harms, trust, permissions and research protocols, and Native student experiences at ISU. LJH and GHF, in collaboration with the whole author team, constructed network diagrams capturing emergent connections and themes, as well as matrices revealing categories and patterns across interview groups (Tracy 2019). These analytical methods enabled emergence of the overarching narrative threads across and among participant experiences.

## Results and Discussion

In this section, we interweave the results in the form of participant responses and discussion to engage in a more narrative-oriented approach to interpreting the results. This more holistic and integrated approach aligns with Native sciences, knowledge systems, and traditions. Given the role of story in traditional Indigenous knowledge transmission (Little Bear 2000; Smith 2021) this approach is potentially more appropriate culturally and specifically when communicating collaborative research findings (Christensen 2012) and avoids decontextualizing participants' narratives (Kovach 2017:403). The stories our participants shared about their lived experience during past research projects involving both ISU and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes indicate that, while conceptions of research and perceptions of the current research relationship differ between Tribally and university-affiliated participants, both express a similar vision of the ideal research relationship as one that is Tribally responsive. Barriers to achieving this ideal research relationship included insufficient acknowledgement of past harms, distrust, negative Native student research experiences, and challenging permissions processes and protocols. Key opportunities for addressing distrust and advancing

Tribally-responsive research revealed in our interviews were enhancing Native student sense of belonging on the ISU campus, building Tribal capacity for research, and acknowledging and reconciling past harms.

### Perceptions of the Research Relationship

To better understand why participants articulated a particular vision of the research relationship and barriers to achieving that vision, we begin by sharing our interviewees' views of the current research relationship. Overall, participants were much more likely to describe the current research relationship between SBT and ISU negatively than either positively or neutrally. Tribally-affiliated participants were more likely than university-affiliated participants to view the relationship negatively, often focusing on the continued extractive nature of engagement. When asked how they would describe the current SBT-ISU research relationship, one Tribal government employee described the extractive practice of post-hoc addition of the Tribes to a funding proposal without their knowledge, typically on projects benefiting the careers of non-Native peoples. They explained that university-affiliated researchers might come to them and say: "We wrote a proposal. The proposal got awarded and now we want to let you [SBT] know that we wrote you into it. And now we want you [SBT] to be part of it." Rather than meaningfully engaging Tribal citizens as co-producers of knowledge or understanding the needs and priorities of the Tribes, this approach positions Tribal researchers and citizens as research subjects or objects and limits potential for community benefit. Interviewees from both groups identified one reason for these continued extractive practices as a lack of valuation of Indigenous knowledge and expertise. This problem was exemplified by an SBT interviewee who shared: "For some reason, we're not thought of as researchers out here [on the reservation]." The view that the Tribes needed help from ISU rather than having both needs and valuable contributions to make was also described as limiting research engagement. For both interviewees and the literature, this deficit positioning of Native peoples within Western research perpetuates ongoing research harms supporting "a classist agenda that disfavors poor and/or Indigenous populations" (Kana'iaupuni 2005: 35).

University-affiliated participants often described the research relationship in more fragile than overtly negative terms, such as disjointed, strained, or delicate. As one ISU interviewee shared: "There has always been this overarching sense [of] tension." Other ISU interviewees expressed concern or worry that the relationships they had cultivated with Tribal partners could be quickly severed by their own or their institutions inopportune words or actions. Idaho State University participants also often added that the overall relationship was improving and that individual or department-level engagement had been positive despite tensions between the two institutions at administrative and societal levels, suggesting individuals were making small inroads toward building stronger relationships between the two entities. Overall, negative perceptions of the current SBT-ISU relationship played a role in how participants thought about the meaning and purpose of research, what an ideal relationship would look like, and what barriers there might be to achieve that ideal.

### The Meaning and Purpose of Research

When we asked what came to mind when they heard the word 'research,' participant responses varied from excitement of advancing knowledge to traumas inflicted through harmful settler-colonial research practices, which have a long legacy in Indigenous communities (Smith 2021). For university-affiliated interviewees, discussions of research often centered on discovery and personal contribution to advancing knowledge.

[When I heard the word research] ... the first word to come to mind was excitement...because to me it's so exciting. You have this question, big or small, and it's gonna be your piece, intellectual property, contribution ... it's exciting when you can mentor students and they can slog through and at the end they see the 'Oh my gosh,' to know I know more than anyone else. It's nice to see that movement in all the fields. [university-affiliated]

For university-affiliated interviewees, the purpose of research was most commonly described as advancing knowledge and less commonly as a way to benefit community. While for Tribally-affiliated interviewees, there was much more emphasis in conversations on how research should or is meant to benefit community. However, discussions about the meaning and purpose of research with Tribally-affiliated participants also often centered on its traumatic or extractive impacts to their communities, with several explaining how the word 'research' brought to mind the idea that something was going to be taken from their community. Below a Tribal administrator explains how the word 'research' can reopen wounds for Native peoples through its connection to a broad range of colonial harms:

... research sends a bad vibe [laughs nervously] ... It's experimental and why would you want to experiment on me? ... there's been a lot of trauma in the past. Adverse effects of the mind, body, and spirit from a long time ago. ... because of all the trauma in the past ... that word is scary. And, as you know, we've had the boarding schools ... So, it is very traumatic when you use that word. [Tribally-affiliated]

Here, the word 'research' triggers trauma, based, in part, on its implied connection to past inhumane studies conducted on residential school children. Residential schools for Native people were part of settler-colonial policies of assimilation, and non-consensual research was conducted on children in these facilities (Mosby 2013). The inhumane experience of residential school attendees created long-lasting intergenerational distrust of formal education (Waterman 2019), and in our interviewees, this distrust extended to the research such institutions conduct.

Despite these negative associations, Tribally-affiliated participants also ascribed positive connotations to research and explained that research could have redemptive values when focused on truth, justice, and capacity building. These redemptive qualities of research were described by a Tribal elder whose work involved a focus on education and who took a rare positive stance about the overall SBT-ISU relationship. When asked what came to mind when they heard the word 'research,' they explained

how research could have positive impacts on the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes through its role in guiding and correcting the educational content on Native peoples and the Shoshone-Bannock:

... we want all the schools and universities to learn ... our history in the proper context. We want to introduce it to teachers in all schools at college and high school [levels] and replace the old books and all those misconceptions. ... In our area here in southeast Idaho, our schools would learn more about the Shoshone-Bannock. [Tribally-affiliated]

In this case, research brought to mind this potential to adjudicate between persistent inaccuracies and outdated content taught to students about Native peoples and accurate histories and cultures. More broadly, given that the majority of K-12 learning standards include teaching about Native peoples in a pre-1900 context (Shear et al. 2015), this shift in standards and the place-based focus where, for example, student learning in southeast Idaho would be focused on the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes could have positive impacts on Native students' sense of belonging in school (Alabanza 2020; Tuck, McKenzie, and McCoy 2014) and therefore, support the educational achievement of Native students (Brayboy et al. 2014). Such educational achievement builds internal capacity within Tribes to address their own social, cultural, economic, and/or political needs. In other words, it supports Native nation building (Brayboy et al. 2012). For a few interviewees, the meaning of research was centered in its capacity to rectify past harms and build stronger inter and intra community relationships.

Native Nation building is not only about building formal education and other capacities among Tribal citizens but also about strengthening place-based identities of Native peoples. A Tribally-affiliated participant explained how they use research to recover the histories of Native families' connections to the land to reanimate those relationships, a concept that has been referred to by Native scholars as restorying (Corntassel 2020). Reconnecting to such stories was explained as a way to reverse the effects of settler-colonial policies like the 1830 Indian Removal Act. Research for this purpose would strengthen the foundational web of relationships among and between Indigenous Peoples and their homelands, which also supports Native Nation building through cultural and psychological resurgence (Simpson 2014).

This strengthening of relationships between Indigenous Peoples, land, and relatives was also core to another conception of research shared by Tribally-affiliated participants. Research, in this sense was described as a "coming to know" process, based in Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies, and in reference to the work of Anishinaabe scholar Deborah McGregor (2018). 'Coming to know' and, perhaps, 'coming to be' meanings of research were explained by a Tribally-affiliated interviewee who, several times in our conversations, shared how problematic the lack of respect for Indigenous Knowledge systems was at ISU. When asked what they thought of when they heard the word 'research,' they explained:

I think of myself as a young boy, out on the landscape with my dad as a navigator, helping me to see the world, to see the animals. Just to see the abundance, to see the

ecosystem processes. That's what I think of research, and continually visiting those homelands and doing those seasonal food rounds, and getting a really good understanding of ecology. ... that's research to me. It identifies me in my culture. It identifies my religious values. It identifies my place on the land, so I know this is home. Those things do a lot, because those essentially develop my axiology and my values. It gives me a place of respect for these lands and for the animals ... this is a real relationship that we have... And I need Sogobia, Mother Earth, to produce, and I need these intact ecosystems for these pathways and connections to exist. That gives me reciprocity. That roots me in a place and a time and gives me that foundation of why I have to [do this work] ... that's what real research is to me. [Tribally-affiliated]

Research, here is a way of being and a way of learning from and coming to know oneself and each other through the teachings of the land and of one's relatives. In this conception of research, by regaining Indigenous knowledge through land and community-based knowledge acquisition, individuals strengthen relationships with each other and with socio-cultural, linguistic, ceremonial, and economic lifeways, such as traditional subsistence and land-use patterns. This, in turn, strengthens community health and well-being (Gray and Cote 2019; McIvor 2013), and supports social, moral, and spiritual capacity-building, all of which are essential to Native Nation building (Brayboy et al. 2012).

### **The Ideal Research Relationship**

In line with conceptions of research as providing knowledge or building capacity toward nation building, interviewees affiliated with both SBT and ISU most commonly described the ideal form of research engagement as one that was responsive to Tribal needs and, therefore, directly beneficial to the Tribes (SBT). For both groups then, what we call "Tribally-responsive research" referred to university-affiliated researchers working in whatever capacity the Tribes needed and at their direction. It could involve close collaboration, or the researcher conducting projects on their own and reporting back. A Tribally-affiliated interviewee explained the importance, yet scarcity of such Tribally-responsive projects, for building a better relationship between SBT and ISU:

The ideal research relationship would be a paradigm where Tribal priorities and Tribal staff or Tribal leaders are able to identify the research topics ahead of time ... allowing the Tribes' priorities to drive the research in a manner that directly benefits the community ... this is the easiest way that we can start to develop a better research relationship. There's all kinds of questions you can ask as a researcher, but one of those primary questions that doesn't seem to be getting asked before they come to us with research proposals is, 'how will this research benefit the Tribes?' [Tribally-affiliated]

For most SBT interviewees, the ideal research approach was similar to this one. It was not necessarily Indigenous-led or co-produced but instead involved being responsive to the Tribes' fluctuating needs and capacities. As this interviewee clearly articulates, the first step and priority for any researcher seeking a relationship with the Tribes should be centering the needs of the Tribes in project development and design. As we describe further below, while Indigenous-led research was the ideal for some, Tribally-responsive research was much more commonly described as the ideal,

in part because of limited Tribal time and resources to dedicate to research. For those who did want to see more Indigenous-led research, there tended to be a focus on increasing Indigenous research capacity. For example, an SBT-affiliated participant described the need to hire more Native faculty at the university to help ensure that more university-sponsored research would be Native-led.

ISU-affiliated interviewees also commonly emphasized the importance of the Tribes driving research topics selection, sometimes explaining that the Tribes should be able to determine what form SBT-ISU research engagement takes. One non-native ISU interviewee describes how listening to Tribal citizens with an openness to change your perspective is key to enacting such Tribally-responsive research:

... I think that what we need to do as non-Tribal members trying to collaborate with the Tribes is, listen, just listen to what they have to say. Listen to their concerns, what they would be looking for in a collaboration, maybe just kind of let go of some of your preconceived notions of what you want that collaboration to look like and listen to what they need that to look like. [university-affiliated]

The repeated focus on the word and action ‘listen’ for this interviewee speaks to a need for researcher flexibility and cultural humility to form Tribally-responsive research partnerships. To achieve the Tribally-responsive research ideal, researchers may need to re-learn or re-think what research means. Such cultural humility is foundational to social justice work (Pham et al. 2022) and is part of a process of acknowledging and redressing past harms.

Importantly, the way interviewees described the ideal research relationship in our conversations was different from the literature on best practices for engaged research with communities. For our interviewees, the ideal vision for research included openness regarding the topical focus of research and regarding the level of engagement of research partners, but consistently emphasized doing what was requested and needed by Tribal partners. In contrast, literature on community-engagement centers co-produced and Indigenous-led research as the ideals. Best practices for community-engaged, and specifically for co-produced research, often emphasize academics and non-academics working together through each stage of a research project, including problem and question identification, data collection, analysis, etc. (Keeler and Locke 2022; Norström et al. 2020; Wyborn et al. 2019). Other scholarship emphasizes the importance, yet scarcity, of Indigenous-led research (Colbourne et al. 2019; David-Chavez and Gavin 2018; McGregor 2018; Smith 2021). While some participants described co-produced or Indigenous-led research as part of their ideal vision, they much more frequently described Tribally-responsive research as the ideal. As such, our study results depart from some best practices of co-production by suggesting that research in support of Native Nation building could take multiple forms, some of which would be less intensive and interactive than typically defined within the co-production literature because of limited Tribal capacity for intense involvement or because of the precedence of other Tribal priorities (see Church et al. 2022). In our conversations with

interviewees, ideal visions focused less on who completed each research stage and more on what the research accomplished and for whom.

While Tribally-affiliated participants only occasionally discussed Indigenous-led research as the ideal form of research engagement, the importance of strengthening Indigenous sovereignty in research and control over the research process did emerge in some conversations. This suggests that Indigenous-led research may be a longer-term goal and that was perhaps not discussed often in our interviews because the capacity isn't yet sufficient to make it broadly feasible. The importance of building this capacity is stressed in the following quotes:

... Why couldn't we begin talking about becoming our own research center? What would it take? ... I think we could find enough support to be able to if we could explain that this is a good way for making sure that we have plenty of Native professionals who help the community. [Tribally-affiliated]

... there should be some help in building the capacity ... to become self-sustainable, self-sufficient. ... utilize that funding to help us build capacity, the way that we see fit. [Tribally-affiliated]

Here, Tribally-affiliated interviewees envision building their own research capacity through research interactions with the university, and they tie this capacity building back to community benefit as well as to self-determination. These are direct examples of how a university can support Native Nation building, but they require a shift in thinking about who benefits from research and who drives its focus.

### **Barriers to Achieving Tribally-Responsive Research Engagement: Past Harms, Negative Student Experiences, and Unclear Research Protocols**

Though Tribally-responsive research was the ideal for most of our participants, many also expressed that this ideal is not currently the norm, while also identifying several barriers to achieving the desired research relationship. While there were many different, specific barriers described, themes emerged around how colonial harms, negative experiences for Native students, and slow or unclear permissions and protocols within both entities prevent the realization of Tribally-responsive research. When talking about these barriers, participants described them as both past and ongoing issues.

***Past harms, lack of acknowledgement, and trust.*** In our study, the most commonly mentioned barrier to successful research partnerships between SBT and ISU centered on past or ongoing harms and ISU's lack of acknowledgement of said harms. Participants described these harms, their lack of meaningful acknowledgement, and, therefore, lack of action regarding them, as creating distrust between the two entities. Based on the interview data, we understand past or ongoing harms as being related to both historical injustices against Native people in general, and specific SBT-focused instances of harm perpetuated by non-Natives, including at different levels of government; by the city of Pocatello; and/or by ISU. One example of a past/ongoing harm described by several participants was that

ISU actively benefits from sitting on forcibly ceded lands without meaningful acknowledgement or action addressing that fact. One Tribal administrator spoke to this challenging context and how it continues to affect Native peoples and the SBT-ISU relationship:

Idaho State University is located on Tribal land, within the [former] boundaries of the [original] reservation ... that's the challenging portion...there is a historical context to all of this, that you can't just dismiss out of hand ... whether you want to talk about historical trauma or structural racism or whatever challenge you want to talk about, you really have to acknowledge that in a meaningful way, before you can move past it. You can't just brush it off and say, "Well, yeah, this used to be Tribal land, but now it's not ... that all happened 100 years ago, none of us here are responsible for it. So, let's just move past it." That's a difficult place to start ... that historical trauma or structural racism, it really carries on multiple generations down the line. [Tribally-affiliated]

In this case, the interviewee speaks to the idea that some non-Native people escape meaningful acknowledgement of past harms through historical relativism. This administrator points out that historical events and traumas have lingering inter-generational effects that still influence experiences into the present. Therefore, Native peoples do not have the privilege of drawing upon historical relativism to distance their present experiences from the past. Further, dismissing the historical influence of past harms on the present inhibits relationship building, creating what the administrator refers to as a "difficult start." Earlier, in the same interview, the participant also explained how western higher education has not historically been available to Native peoples. That idea requires further consideration of the assimilationist US policies that led to the boarding school era and affected other aspects of education for Native peoples (Adams 1995; Waterman 2019). There has been a historic lack of access to research for Native peoples in both benefiting from and conducting research. Access to education, particularly culturally-responsive education is key to Native Nation building (Brayboy et al. 2014). Culturally-responsive education is based on learning and relating knowledge to the diversity of cultural backgrounds and ways of knowing and doing within classrooms and the wider world.

Another Tribal administrator expressed not only the need to acknowledge and address that the university sits on stolen land, but that Indigenous peoples' knowledge are not valued at ISU, and that continues to be detrimental to the SBT-ISU relationship:

... there needs to be an appreciation for the true history of what occurred, there needs to be recognition that ISU is benefiting off of stolen Tribal land ... there needs to be recognition that the Tribes have knowledge systems, and that academia isn't the capital T in truth of knowledge. There were knowledge systems on this landscape well before ISU came here ... those things aren't given any priority over there [at ISU] ... until there's some respect shown for that ... it's not going to be a really good relationship. [Tribally-affiliated]

Here, our participant suggests that lack of acknowledgement functions as a barrier to a good research relationship when it is directed at past colonial harms but also through ongoing disregard for Native peoples' knowledge and scholarship.

Overall, Tribally-affiliated participants were more likely to frame past harms as something that needed to be continuously and meaningfully acknowledged as SBT and ISU work on their relationship; the continued lack of acknowledgement and respect for Tribal lands and Indigenous knowledges were barriers for Tribal citizens in trusting ISU.

Importantly, Tribally-affiliated and university-affiliated participants generally diverged when describing how these past or ongoing harms impact the present. Many ISU participants recognized that historical context, including past harms, affects the relationship. They differed, however, by not regarding them as 'ongoing' or something requiring continual redressing, but rather as something that happened and exists squarely in the past. This difference in understanding and regard for past harm contributes to the lack of trust Native peoples have in university researchers. It also hinders relationship building when Native peoples feel compelled to acknowledge these past harms with university-affiliated people and the information feels disregarded. Indeed, some ISU interviewees framed conversations of past harms as an obstacle to relationship building, as explained here by one ISU researcher who indicated that focusing on past harms might actually inhibit future-oriented thinking:

I've been in meetings where you're trying to talk to people and get [SBT] to understand ... what we do, and how the university functions ... derailed by long speeches about land and stolen lands, and all of these kinds of narratives that seems like it's hard to get past so you can get to another place of growth and development. [university-affiliated]

However, some university-affiliated participants expressed an understanding of historical racism and that past and ongoing harms impact modern contexts. The following quote from another university researcher exemplifies how addressing these harms will likely take hundreds of years:

I know a lot of white people just say, 'Oh, it's been so long ago,' and 'it's no big deal.' And yet, when I've educated myself about what happened at the beginning of our country, it's more appalling than is even written in a history book. It's much worse than we were taught ... it's genocide. I think there's still lingering pieces of that, and that we don't want to admit it, and we don't want to fix it ... to fix it we'd have to admit [it] first ... People wonder how long is it going to be till they're healed ... historical trauma will be healed at the same rate that it was occurring to them. But it can't start the healing process until oppression ends ... oppression hasn't even ended yet ... we haven't begun the healing process ... we can't even start counting the timeline of hundreds of years that it's gonna take. [university-affiliated]

This ISU researcher not only acknowledges the lasting impact of these harms, but that they are ongoing as oppression persists. Though many participants discussed the continuing impacts of research harms, they expressed a diversity of opinions about the need for acknowledging these harms and the best way to do so. Because of this, finding appropriate, agreed upon, approaches to building and strengthening the research relationship between SBT and ISU has been challenging.

Historical harm and oppression were not the only barriers impacting the present relationship cited in our interviews. Other examples of harm described included racism in the broader community surrounding Fort Hall and the University; exploitation of Native peoples by white, university-affiliated researchers through misrepresentation of Tribal/Indigenous knowledges and histories in wider publication and academic discourse, among other things. Further, in our interviews, distrust between the Tribes and university was identified as a symptom not only of violent, complex histories but also of past/ongoing harms of colonization, racism, exploitation, and norms within academia. In particular, interviewees often explained how publication expectations often set academics up in opposition to the scholarly contributions and knowledges of Native peoples. This problem was exacerbated by the fact that tenure requirements value products intended for the scholarly community over those of direct benefit to Native communities. Finally, interviews described how structural inequities privilege western science above all other ways of knowing. These forms of epistemic violence impacting Natives' experiences in and of research are well attested in the literature (Riley et al. 2023; Settles et al. 2024; Walters et al. 2019). Overall, these past and ongoing harms were identified as a significant barrier to achieving an ideal research relationship. Acknowledging these harms in meaningful ways and taking significant action addressing them was identified as an important step to improving the research relationship.

**Negative Native student experiences.** Negative experiences by Native students at the university were also identified as a barrier to achieving an ideal research relationship. While student experiences were not within the original scope of our study, stories of Tribal participants' experiences as students at ISU and the stories of other ISU students of whom they were aware came out in our conversations and clearly mediated how participants viewed the research relationship and its prospects moving forward. Many SBT participants spoke of feeling unwelcome on campus; the lack of support from ISU administration, faculty, and staff; a lack of understanding of their backgrounds as Native people; and a devaluation of their experiences and knowledges. For example, one current Tribal administrator and former ISU student recalled feeling unwelcome at ISU due to a lack of guidance:

... I know when I was a student there, I didn't feel any support. I didn't even know where to go. I was floundering when I was there in the beginning...there wasn't really a whole lot of guidance from ISU ... I just didn't feel welcome. [Tribally-affiliated]

In addition to feeling unwelcome, some participants spoke to feeling invisible and unacknowledged on campus. In some cases, these negative experiences coupled with the lack of support and understanding of Native students in general, led to students not being successful at ISU.

The implications of negative student experiences at ISU for improving the research relationship between SBT and ISU were made clear by another Tribal participant with student experiences at ISU. The participant described their disinterest in contributing to western science and to a project they felt did not serve Tribal needs or their goals as a Tribal community member and researcher:

ISU wanted me to do what was interesting to them, and for them, and to advance western science, which wasn't interesting to me ... I didn't see the value in adding to the western library for some little niche a professor saw that would be novel ... the way I look at traditional science, it's based off of a real need to the community and to the people ... I struggled to see that linkage between what they were offering, and what was interesting and needed from the community. [Tribally-affiliated]

This sentiment alludes to how many Native students pursue higher education to take that knowledge and experience back and work with their peoples and within their home communities (Brayboy et al. 2014; Waterman 2019; Waterman and Lindley 2013). Further, it speaks to the importance for academics to understand, respect, value and reward these types of community-driven ambitions. Another Tribal researcher, and former student, described their experience at ISU as unenjoyable and spoke to feeling no support or validation from faculty advisors:

... in the process of science, you're looking for validation, and I just did not have that validation. I knew from my [advisors] that they truly did not see me as a scientist. I think they felt like they were doing me a favor, rather than I had earned what I worked for ... I did what was required of the institution to get a degree, but I didn't go through the [graduation] ceremony itself ... I felt sort of robbed [of] that ... it was a very unenjoyable experience for me. [Tribally-affiliated]

Both of these examples demonstrate structural inequities within academia that perpetuate a privileging of western epistemological biases that often position Indigenous peoples in a deficit model (Menchaca 2012; Ponting and Voyageur 2001) and as research subjects rather than researchers, scholars, and knowledge producers. For our SBT interviewees, this positioning contributed to their feelings of isolation and distrust because it negated their research goals and achievements. Further, Native Nation building flourishes through Native peoples conducting and benefiting from culturally-, and locally-relevant knowledge and research.

Overall, many participants recognized the important role students play in the wider Tribal-university relationship. These stories of negative student experiences, however, likely entrench distrust of the university, potentially contributing to ISU's low Native student, specifically Shoshone-Bannock, population. The low Native student populations coupled with typical western academic research practices, limit Native student research involvement at ISU, a potential point of intervention that would improve the research relationship between the two entities suggested by several participants. This is supported by research demonstrating that an improved sense of belonging for students, including on-campus social support and reciprocal relationships between community and university, is directly linked to retention and success (Guillory and Wolverton 2008; Marroquín 2020; Waterman 2019). Many interviewees stated that the Tribes would be more interested in supporting projects increasing research capacities within the Tribal community when they are created by and/or carried out by Shoshone-Bannock students. In addition to building capacity and contributing

to Native Nation building, this would also help the two entities meet the goals of Tribally-responsive research. Tribally-enrolled students would likely have a strong sense of important research topics within the community, and a better understanding of navigating the processes, permissions, and protocols within the Tribal governmental system. Participants also identified the need for more robust administrative and structural support for Native students at the university to achieve a sense of belonging for Native students and encourage them to participate in and lead research at the SBT-ISU interface.

***Unclear, slow, and/or cumbersome permission and protocols.*** In addition to distrust resulting from past and ongoing harms and negative student experiences as barriers to the ideal research relationship, participants from SBT and ISU reported slow, unclear, and complex research protocols also impeded the relationship. Idaho State University's interviewees described permissions and protocols as deterring investment in research collaborations. For example, one shared how the burdensome approvals process reduced motivation to collaborate:

... there's always the red tape both from the Tribal administration and then also the university. ... it could be a series of steps of getting an agreement ... those are all things that always worry me that it's going to interrupt how or whether we can do the project. ... I like to just be able to ... get out and do the data collection and work with the students ... and publish ... our results. ... the bureaucracy of both sides can cause me to think that ... we won't be able to do the project because there's too many boxes that we have to check and make sure that we're doing it right. [university-affiliated]

This researcher expresses anxiety concerning joint research pragmatics and reduced enthusiasm for collaboration and partnered research. Similarly, a student researcher navigating a potential research partnership explains how lack of clarity around protocols can complicate Tribally-engaged research.

... [conducting research] was a little bit frustrating. I really wish that there was a clear process. I felt through the process like I was the first one doing it in every single process ... Nobody knew how to work with the Tribes, and I had to ask around and figure it out on my own ... And I don't feel like ISU had a clear idea as to what needed to happen in the process. I don't feel like my coworkers had a clear idea of the process. [Tribally-affiliated]

This Tribally-affiliated researcher expresses frustration that no person or program at ISU could identify a clear process for conducting research with their own community. However, in addition to complicating the research process, this apparent lack of clarity concerning how to conduct research with the Tribes may serve as a layer of protection from research exploitation. A less-transparent, less stream-lined research approval process may necessitate more relationship-building and allow for more informal vetting, ultimately helping to protect Tribal communities from research exploitation. Slowing down the process and not publicizing research approval processes requires researchers to form relationships to identify those protocols. Whether strategic or not, Tribal participants described how reluctance to share information

through research was a result of past/ongoing harms, contributing to challenges in acquiring research approval.

From a researcher's perspective ... the Tribes are really protective of their information ... And they don't share a whole lot. I can't even get our suicide rates here on a reservation. I have to go through the Council to get that ... as a researcher, it's hard to get information from the Tribe, because of that ownership perspective. They really want to be protective of their information, because they've been exploited in the past. [Tribally-affiliated]

While clarifying protocols for research and making these publicly available would seem to facilitate Tribal-university research engagement, without addressing the underlying distrust that may be driving this barrier, we risk only treating the symptoms. From the university-side, the lack of a clear process may stem from a lack of value placed on community-engaged research, on Indigenous knowledges, and on addressing past harms. An ISU interviewee reflected on how a holistic vision of the SBT-ISU relationship and its underlying historic context and relationships is needed to identify appropriate interventions to enhance research engagement:

... you get people thinking, as long as we just do this thing, we'll have taken one of the key steps to remedy the problem. It just doesn't work that way. It's not a mechanical process. And it's not a one and done thing, either. It won't be a solution... [if] you're not actually paying attention to the web of connections and the contextual relationships, that are what give these things meaning in the first place ... that's how you end up with a well-meaning memorandum of understanding between the Tribes and the university, and then a decade or more of essentially no action associated with it. [university-affiliated]

This suggests that real action to support Tribally-responsive research and Native Nation building won't come from a single policy, like establishing a Tribally-engaged research application process or even signing a memorandum of agreement, but that change will require close and ongoing attention to relationship repair and trust-building processes.

### Conclusion

Research engagement between Tribal Nations and universities in rural areas holds the promise of strengthening relationships among people across these entities, supporting economic development of rural areas, and facilitating reconciliation processes to address past and ongoing harms to Indigenous Peoples perpetuated by institutions of higher education (Sowerwine et al. 2019; Thomas and Spang Gion 2021). Research may best align with reconciliation processes when it supports Native Nation building or the resurgence of Tribal self-determination in political, economic, and social affairs. To achieve these goals, however, we need to understand the ideal visions for research engagement among people involved in this partnered research space, as well as the on-the-ground barriers to achieving them. Our qualitative study in rural southeast Idaho found both Tribally-affiliated and university-affiliated participants wanted to see more Tribally-responsive research

aligned with Tribal priorities and capacities. Unlike much of the literature on co-production and community-based research in general that promulgates the best practice of researchers working intensively with community partners through each stage of the research project (Norström et al. 2020) our participants were open to projects being conducted with varying levels of Tribal engagement, so long as the projects were driven by Tribal priorities and directly beneficial to the Tribes. Most past and current research engagement in this study, though was described as failing to meet this bar. The major barrier to achieving Tribally-responsive research was lack of meaningful acknowledgement of past/ongoing harms that created distrust. This distrust was further reinforced through oppressive Native student experiences in the university space and contributed to slow/unclear permission and protocols for research, further limiting engagement. Our study suggests that achieving Tribally-responsive research and its benefits for Tribal Nations and rural communities will require meaningful acknowledgement of past/ongoing harms by universities as well as an emphasis on research engagement in support of Tribal nation building.

Practicing relational accountability and meaningful research calls for further involvement and action than typical in western research. Relational accountability entails responsibility to share the results of this project widely and advocate for change with those who participated in this project, especially Shoshone-Bannock Tribal community members whom these results affect. Since submitting this publication, we have shared our research results with over 100 Tribal and university-affiliated attendees at a Town Hall event on the Fort Hall Reservation, providing an open space for dialogue on the findings. Based on interview data and common best practices, and with the support of the Fort Hall Business Council via Tribal resolution, we have made recommendations to ISU leadership based on identified needs from this study and have been working with ISU leaders and the Tribal University Advisory Board to implement these changes. Our recommendations include: increasing Native representation, visibility, and a sense of Shoshone-Bannock presence on campus; improving researcher awareness of Native research sovereignty and associated research ethics; increasing the value placed on community-centered research engagements and products; and creating more support and a stronger sense of belonging for Native students at ISU to demonstrate the university values and honor Indigenous Peoples and heritages.

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