

Arctic Landscape Ecology Lab Charter

Overview

The ALE Lab is committed to creating inclusive and respectful spaces for all members of our research group. This charter outlines the responsibilities and expectations for all members of the lab (graduate students, research assistants, supervisors, postdocs, and guests of the lab). A core goal of this document is to ensure that all members share a common understanding of these principles. As a lab, we all agree to demonstrate our commitments to these values through ongoing dialogue, training, transparency, and intentional effort in all activities we undertake as members of the ALE Lab.

Guiding Principles

1. We acknowledge that universities are based in colonial structures and that the University of Victoria, where we conduct our research, is no different. We seek to challenge institutional barriers and colonial power structures that discourage or block Indigenous participation in research, both locally and in the Beaufort Delta region where our research occurs. We are committed to supporting Indigenous-led research, with the aim of elevating diverse forms of knowledge, the knowledge holders of the communities we partner with, and invaluable insights that they provide. We seek to design our research practices in ways that reallocate power and work towards an anti-colonial present and future. We commit to learning more about the diverse history of the Saanich peninsula and all the places where we live, work and build our communities through the following actions.
 - a. *Participating in learning opportunities led by local knowledge holders.*
 - b. *Undertaking self-directed training on local history.*
 - c. *Learning about and supporting ongoing work to challenge colonial structures at the University of Victoria and in the Capital Regional District.*
2. We recognize that research has an impact on the (largely Indigenous) communities we work with and commit to making our work relevant and valuable to our community partners. We commit to upholding Indigenous rights as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP) along four key themes relevant to researchers (Ignace et al., 2023): (1) self-determination, (2) free, prior, and informed consent, (3) intellectual property, and (4) engagement and learning. We commit to using a trans-disciplinary approach where our Indigenous partners are collaborators in the research process and are involved in all steps from project design through to publication/dissemination. We will conduct research in a way that allows our Indigenous partners to determine what and how research will be conducted in their territories and supports Indigenous research sovereignty at national, regional, and local scales (ITK, 2017).

This commitment requires free, prior, and informed consent for all stages of a research project. We will ensure that any Indigenous Knowledge collected during a project is shared and stored with the relevant Indigenous partner organizations in accordance with local practices and agreements. We will follow established protocols and regulations related to research permitting, licensing and other agreements required by our northern Indigenous partners. We will use Indigenous place names, if available, in any presentations or publications. We will also ensure that we share frequent project updates and findings with our partners and participating communities in an appropriate format. We aim to do research in service of the North and the communities that have lived there for generations. Our work seeks to support community research priorities and mobilize knowledge in ways that are meaningful to partner communities, and their priorities and goals.

- a. *When applying for research funding and preparing grant applications, we include our Indigenous partners as co-leads and co-applicants.*
- b. *Ensure co-developed projects address and give authority to Indigenous partners' priority concerns and partner-approved methods/best practices.*
 - *Indigenous collaborators will be included as co-authors on publications.*
 - *For projects that are community supported, but not co-developed (capacity, low priority etc.), we aim to use our findings to support partner communities by building capacity through knowledge.*
- c. *Seek funding for meaningful involvement of northerners within research projects, such as research coordinator, wildlife monitor, interview and field assistants, etc.*
- d. *Seek funding to create employment opportunities in northern communities that facilitate northern engagement, and to compensate collaborators, especially Indigenous knowledge holders, for their time/expertise*
- e. *Ensure consistent and regular communication (project updates, findings, and project-related information) with organizations and individuals throughout the lifetime of a project.*
 - *Budget for funding and time to provide consistent communication to collaborators and relevant organizations*
- f. *Use established data sharing agreements created by Indigenous collaborators*
 - *Cultural ownership of knowledge will be respected following First Nations Principles of OCAP (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (<https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/>))*
- g. *Implement alternative ways to engage community experts in lab research (visits to campus, steering committee membership, formalized graduate student mentorship, etc.). Where possible, use Indigenous place names, if available, in any publications, presentations, or other project outputs.*
- h. *Include an author positionality statement in publications that include both Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners, interviews with Indigenous knowledge holders and/or use of Indigenous knowledge.*

3. The ALE lab values diversity in all its forms as a source of strength, cultural enrichment, and excellence. Different viewpoints will be valued and celebrated, with special attention paid to the cultural context in which we work and live, and the aim of elevating historically marginalized or silenced voices.
 - a. *We will regularly discuss and identify barriers to the recruitment and retention of historically and systemically marginalized groups and identify ways to remove these barriers.*
 - b. *We commit to creating a physical lab environment that is welcoming to all members and includes visible signs of our commitment to diversity.*
 - c. *We commit to regular and ongoing training on diversity, equity, and inclusion once every term, totalling to two times a year.*
 - d. *When recruiting new lab members, we will advertise positions nationally and internationally using social media (facebook and twitter) and listservs (caglist, cryolist, etc.). Issuing broad calls helps to build a large and diverse applicant pool, which facilitates the creation of a diverse team of exceptional researchers. Position descriptions will state our commitment to diversity and encourage historically and systemically marginalized groups to apply.*
4. The ALE lab is an inclusive and safe space, where discrimination, harassment, or bullying of any kind will not be tolerated. Discrimination includes microaggressions, personal discrimination, and systemic discrimination as defined in the University of Victoria's Discrimination and Harassment Prevention and Response Policy (https://www.uvic.ca/universitysecretary/assets/docs/policies/GV0205_1150_.pdf). As a lab community we strive to call each other in, creating a safe judgment-free space for learning without shame when addressing inappropriate behaviours and how those behaviours can be modified in the future. If this approach is not appropriate or effective, challenges should be communicated with the Lab PI (Trevor), EQHR, or university ombudsperson. As a lab we also commit to checking in with colleagues who may be experiencing discrimination, harassment, or bullying. Those seeking to disclose or report violations of UVic's Discrimination and Harassment Policy can do so through the steps outlined in the policy. Lab members who bring forth instances of harassment, discrimination, or bullying will not be faced with retaliation in any form.
 - a. *We will ensure that all lab members understand these principles by reviewing this charter at the beginning of each major term: ensuring that new members of the lab are aware of the commitments and values outlined in this document.*
 - b. *We will maintain a published version of the charter on the lab website and a working document that is reviewed and revised annually*
 - c. *We will provide this document to applicants in later stages of recruitment to ensure that they are aware of the lab environment they may be joining.*
5. The ALE lab has a shared goal to maintain healthy communication by cultivating an atmosphere of inclusivity, transparency, and mutual respect among lab members throughout day-to-day lab

functions as well as field work. All activities inside and outside the lab are founded on a culture of mutual respect and ongoing consent, which requires respect for one another's autonomy alongside clear and continuous communication. Central to our goal of transparent communication, we recognize the importance of maintaining the highest standard of professional and interpersonal interactions with all members of the campus community, and all the contexts within which we work. Informed consent practices will be conducted with an appreciation for differences in levels of comfort and experience. Consent is ongoing and lab members are encouraged to ask for clarification throughout any activity or process. Listed below are some examples of actions to be taken by the lab to maintain communication, transparency, consent, and mutual respect. These actions must be **communicated** as well as **executed** by all lab members.

- a. Maintain open discussions about lab working spaces, lab activities, research activities, co-authorships, and fieldwork.*
 - b. Maintain open communication regarding needs within the shared lab space (noise levels, disruptions, gear, samples, positivity, support, etc.)*
 - c. Maintain space to seek clarifications, share boundaries and comfort levels, and ask for help.*
 - d. Maintain transparent communication regarding field activities and the annual development of field safety plans to ensure individuals working in the field are safe and well-supported.*
 - e. Create a comprehensive field operations document that outlines expectations for how we operate in communities and how we operate as a group. This resource should also cover fieldwork that lies outside of the "typical" summer fieldwork.*
 - f. Sharing of resources (R Code, grant applications, PowerPoint templates) is encouraged, but lab members acknowledge that sharing is a consent-based process that doesn't extend past the person you shared the resources with.*
6. We commit to recognizing the primary importance of health and wellbeing within the ALE lab. Our commitment goes beyond the recognition of health and wellbeing, extending to various ways that members of the lab can support and lift each other up.
 - a. Making space for talking about wellbeing, while maintaining healthy boundaries for all individuals.*
 - b. Taking the time to celebrate successes!*
 - c. Appreciating and recognizing efforts and actions of our fellow lab members.*
 - d. Committing to fun activities within lab time to improve and maintain positive social dynamics within the lab.*

University of Victoria policies relevant to this document are listed below. Please ensure that you are familiar with these documents before signing off on this one.

Policies

- [Discrimination and Harassment Policy](#)
- [Policy on Human Rights, Equity and Fairness](#)
- [Sexualized Violence Prevention and Response Policy](#)
- [Policy on Prevention of Violence in the Workplace](#)
- [UVIC Policy on Academic Integrity](#)

Resources

- [Indigenous Cultural Acumen Training](#)
- [Preventing and Responding to Sexualized Violence at UVic](#)
- [Sexualized violence prevention workshops](#)
- [UVic Ombudsperson](#)

Closing Remarks

The goal of this charter is to promote the ideals and actions outlined above within our lab community, within each of our projects, and within the broader communities in which we learn and work. This charter is a living document that will evolve alongside our work. As we grow, learn, and gain new insights, we will revisit and refine it to ensure it continues to be relevant, meaningful, and reflective of our values and shared goals.

References

Ignace, L., Burton, L., Mynott, S., Meehan, M., Olson, E., Steel, J., Ojeda, J., Harper, S., Ramirez, L., and Ban, N.C. (2023). Researchers' responsibility to uphold Indigenous rights. *Science*, 381(6654), 129-131.

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. 2018. National Inuit Strategy on Research. Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Ottawa.

Last updated. June 18, 2026.