

PROCESS OF CONDUCTING RESEARCH PROJECTS ON THE SAN CARLOS APACHE RESERVATION, ARIZONA

Introduction

Conducting research on Native American Reservation lands demands a unique protocol that prospective researchers need to understand and respect in order to proceed in an ethical and culturally sensitive manner. First, and foremost, researchers must recognize that they are working on sovereign lands and that cultural and legal issues may be very different than that of their own upbringing and background.

Approval of research proposals will vary depending upon the Tribe or Nation on whose territory the research will be conducted; therefore, researchers must become informed about the requirements in place on their specific Reservation of interest. In some cases, a letter from the Tribal Council may be sufficient. In others, the approval of a tribal Institutional Review Board (IRB) may be required. No research should be conducted based on verbal approval from one individual. The researcher must insure that the appropriate Tribal representative or group has issued approval, in writing, before proceeding with any research activities.

All Research that involves Tribal individuals must incorporate an 'Informed Consent' form. Informed Consent should be considered an ongoing process that drives open and honest communication between the researcher and the subject throughout the term of the research. The form should be written in language that is easily understood by the subject to insure that the subject fully understands what he is signing. It must include specific statements covering:

- The volunteer nature of the subject's participation
- The project purpose

- Selection criteria for subjects
- Duration of subject participation
- Research procedures
- Risks and benefits to the subject
- Confidentiality measures
- Participation Costs and Subject Compensation
- Project Contacts
- Liability

Guidelines and examples of this form can be found at the University of Arizona site: <http://www.publichealth.arizona.edu/StudentResources/Documents/HIPAAFAQs.swf/>. Other universities have similar sites with Consent Form information. A federal checklist for consent forms can be found at: <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/humansubjects/assurance/consentckls.htm>. Creation and use of an Informed Consent form is a crucial step that must be undertaken prior to engaging Tribal members in research projects that affect individuals.

Procedures for Conducting Research on the San Carlos Apache Reservation

Two different procedures exist for conducting research on the San Carlos Apache Reservation, depending upon the subject matter of the research. If the research concerns natural resources of any type, the Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) and the Tribal Natural Resources Committee will oversee the project. If the research concerns health and welfare issues, including all issues not related to natural resources, the Tribal Health and Welfare Committee will oversee the project. *The*

San Carlos Apache Tribe Intellectual Property Rights for Research Projects document states:

- “The intent of the Intellectual Property Policy is to provide for a mechanism for bringing tribal intellectual property into the public realm and to promote utilization of such property for the public benefit.” (p. 2)
- “The objective of this policy is to safeguard the interests and sovereignty of the Tribe by establishing a mechanism for the development and protection of intellectual property, while at the same time encouraging creative thinking and protecting the interests of the Tribe, the public, Tribal employees and contractors, and community members.” (p. 2)

For natural resources related research, the procedure is as follows:

- Present research proposal to IDT committee, which meets monthly, for approval. Contact the IDT coordinator at San Carlos Forestry (928-475-2326) for the meeting schedule and to get on the agenda.
- If the IDT approves the proposal, with or without modifications, the researcher will then meet with the Tribal Natural Resources Committee, which meets monthly. Contact Tribal Administration for meeting schedule and to get on the agenda (928-475-2361, press O for operator to get out of the voice mail system).
- After the Tribal Natural Resources Committee approves the research project, it is submitted to the Tribal Council for approval and a formal, documented resolution. This may require attendance at the Tribal Council monthly meeting. Contact Tribal Administration at the number above.
- The Tribal Chairperson’s signature is required.

For all other types of research, the procedure is as follows:

- Present research proposal and prepared resolution template to the Tribal Health and Welfare Committee. Contact Director of Health and Human Services (928-475-2798) at San Carlos Health and Human Services for the template, meeting schedule, and to get on the agenda.

- If the Health and Human Services approves the proposal, with or without modifications, the proposal will go to the Tribal Council for approval and a formal, signed resolution. This may require attendance at the Tribal Council monthly meeting. Contact Tribal Administration at the number above.
- The Tribal Chairperson will have to sign the resolution.

In both cases the Tribal Office of General Counsel may wish to review the proposal before it goes to Tribal Council in order to determine any issues of intellectual property ownership. Please refer to *The San Carlos Apache Tribe Intellectual Property Rights for Research Projects*. To request a copy of this document, contact the director of Health and Human Services at the number above.



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This information has been reviewed by university faculty.
cals.arizona.edu/pubs/natresources/az1475.pdf

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