



Creating a Culture of Research

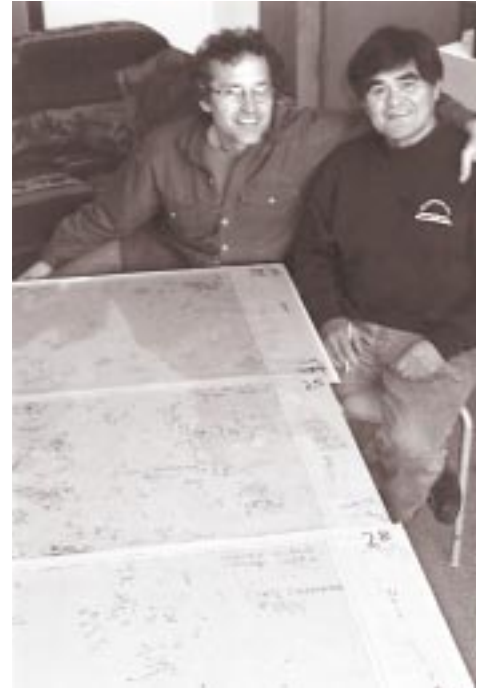
The most obvious result of giving insufficient thought to the measures of quality, principles, and parameters described in this book is that the research product is likely to fall short of the project's immediate objectives. There is a bigger picture to consider though. A community's experience, positive or negative, of its own land use and occupancy initiatives contributes to its culture of research. This is the group's collective understanding of research and its benefits, and people's willingness to contribute to an ongoing research program.

How receptive are community members to the announcement of yet another study or survey? Does it make people grumpy and elicit comments like "We've been studied to death," or "It'll never change anything," or "They've already asked me those kinds of questions before?" Do people respond with a sense of optimism and enthusiasm? Is there resistance to the idea, or openness?

It is critical to ask these kinds of questions while designing any particular piece of research because the answers are suggestive of the response burden likely to be encountered, and the participation that can be expected. It is also important that your government does what it can to encourage a culture of research that is favourable to future initiatives. The long-term research needs must be kept in mind, with the goal being that community members, when called upon, will be willing to support their government's call for information and knowledge.

The collective attitude towards a particular project is largely determined by people's experiences of previous research endeavours. There are things that can be done so that the overall experience of any particular land use and occupancy study will enhance the community's culture of research. Here is a short list.

- ◆ Honour the principle of informed consent – make sure that people have lots of information about the study prior to data collection, so that there is a groundswell of understanding out in the community, not just among the administration.
- ◆ Design the research carefully, and make sure that the project does not generate excessive response burden.
- ◆ Support your interviewers in every way you can, and recognize the difficulty of their task and the pivotal role they play.
- ◆ Follow through on any promises made to participants, such as a commitment to provide a personal copy of the session audiocassette, or a promise to notify them personally as to when and where the composites will be displayed.
- ◆ Hold a series of well-planned community verification meetings, and do everything you can to ensure they are well attended.
- ◆ Acknowledge the completion of the project with a celebration, and publicly thank all participants and the research team.
- ◆ Make sure that the final research products are accessible to all community members, and that everybody knows they exist.
- ◆ Keep people informed about the processes in which the research findings are being used, and the outcomes.



The author and Cyril Carpenter of the Heiltsuk Nation take a break during Cyril's map biography session. Creating a strong culture of research in your community is largely a matter of being thoughtful about the needs of participants. Every interview provides an opportunity to appreciate and respect another human being, and when approached in this manner, the work is very gratifying. When this is the case, community members are more likely to support their government's subsequent research projects.