

Calls to Action: Working as a Natural Scientist in Canada

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The Canadian Mountain Assessment

WALKING TOGETHER TO ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING
OF MOUNTAINS IN CANADA

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CHAPTER 3

Mountains as Homelands

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“For the mountain is one and indivisible, and rock, soil, water, and air are no more integral to it than what grows from the soil and breathes the air. All are aspects of one entity, the living mountain.”—Shepherd, 1977, p. 48

<https://ucp.manifoldapp.org/projects/9781773855103>

Mountains as Homelands

Homelands and homes

- “Pull of the mountains” → western traditions
 - Division between nature and culture
- Deep sense of belonging that structures and transforms interactions with the material world
 - Multi-generational, interconnected
 - Human and non-human

Mountains as Homelands

Time Immemorial

“We call it homeland because of our grandfathers’ trails”

- Pnnal Bernard Jerome (Micmac of Gesgapegiag)

- Mountains as places for ongoing learning, traditions
- Relations and responsibilities: sharing, giving back, stewardship
- Concept of “Time Immemorial”

Truth and Reconciliation

- 2015 report
- 94 Calls to Action to address intergenerational legacy of racism and residential schools
- Wong et al (2020): **Towards reconciliation: 10 Calls to Action to natural scientists working in Canada**

Call 1: We call on natural scientists to understand the socio-political landscape around their research sites.

- Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination
- By respecting rights, treaties, we respect self-determination
- Obligation to consult with First Nations before doing any research
 - Which territory?
 - Which government/community?
 - Who to talk to?
 - Who benefits?
- Relationship building: Complex! Takes time!

Call 2: We call on natural scientists to recognize that generating knowledge about the land is a goal shared with Indigenous peoples and to seek meaningful relationships and possible collaboration for better outcomes for all involved.

- Go beyond responsibility to consult
- Possibilities
- Acknowledge knowledge/expertise on the land
- *Meaningful engagement*: valuable perspectives, better research outcomes
- Better to build from the start, rather than repair/react
- Behaviour >>> credentials
- Time, capacity, patience, trust

Call 3: We call on natural scientists to enable knowledge sharing and knowledge co-production.

- Make research accessible
 - Digestible, one-page summaries
 - Social media/videos
- Information needs?
- Co-production: work in synergy with Indigenous communities
- Success: knowledge is passed down
- Respect: build time and space to listen

Call 4: We call upon natural scientists studying animals to seek out advice from Elders for respectful ways of handling animals.

- Each area has specific customs: learn before starting, and follow those!
- Advice of elders → go through institution
- Balance animal ethics / specific customs

Call 5: We call upon natural scientists to provide meaningful opportunities for Indigenous community members, particularly youth, to experience and participate in science.

- Build future generations of Indigenous researchers who can incorporate both Indigenous knowledges and western scientific
- Researchers can help build math/science skills by bringing youth out onto their territory
- Provides work opportunities, builds confidence
- Linking research with cultural revitalization

Call 6: To decolonize the landscape, we call on natural scientists to incorporate Indigenous place names as permitted.

- Indigenous names reflect tradition, describe specific features
- Names can act as warning signs
- Living maps: hazards, disasters
- Indigenous names first
- Revitalize language
- Legal status/personhood

Call 7: We call upon natural scientists and their students to take a course on Indigenous history and rights.

- Educate on residential schools, UNDRIP, rights
- History and rights should be taught by Indigenous instructors
- Incorporate Indigenous knowledge in normal courses

Call 8: Funding

- CV not appropriate
- Funding agencies should adjust weighting
- Disbursement of money

Call 10: Finally, we call on all natural scientists and postsecondary research institutions to develop a new vision for conducting natural science: fundamentally mainstreaming reconciliation in all aspects of the scientific endeavor, from formulation to completion.