Power Over Knowledge: Digital Sovereignty and Implementing OCAP in Research with Indigenous Communities

Liam Midzain-Gobin
Brock University
November 7, 2023

Settler scholar of colour: political science

■ Fraser Valley (Stó:lō; BC) -> Hamilton (Anishinaabe & Haudenosaunee; ON)

■ Settler colonial continuity & Indigenous disruptions

– *Sovereignty*

Brock
University

Overview

1. Existing tensions in settler-led research
2. Framework for resolutions:
   - *Data sovereignty*
   - *OCAP*
3. In practice: 2 projects
   - *Building Inter-National Sovereignty*
   - *Indigenous Housing in Niagara*

How do we realize Indigenous self-determination in settler-led research?

Where does digital data fit into this?

Key Issues

- Research as a colonial enterprise:
- *Indigenous peoples are "known," not 'knowers'*
- *Data, findings, results: all written from settler perspectives*
- Data used and held by settlers/settler institutions

Indigenous Data Sovereignty

"...the right of Indigenous Peoples to own, control, access and possess data that derive from them, and which pertain to their members, knowledge systems, customs or territories."

(Kukutai et al., 2020: 654)

OCAP

- Ownership
- Control
- Access
- Possession

*Developed by the First Nations Information Governance Centre

Implementing in Research

2 Ongoing projects:

- Building Inter-National Sovereignty: The Case of the Big Salmon River
  - *2 nations; 13 First Nations; 3 organizations*

- Indigenous Housing in Niagara
  - *2 peoples; 5 organizations; urban Indigenous population*

Brock
University

Implementing in Research – Institutional Barriers

- Ethics considerations: data ownership + retention

- Open data policies

  - *SSHRC*

  - *Academic journals*

- Lack of institutional know-how

  - *No existing policies/frameworks*

  - *Lack of preparation for Indigenous ownership*

  - *Assumption: university as authority*

Brock University

Implementing in Research – Solutions

- Centre Indigenous sovereignty: partners hold data
- *Access granted through data sharing agreements*
- Grant proposals: write in Indigenous data sovereignty
- *Costs for IT infrastructure to host*
- *Explicit reference to implementation of OCAP + concrete plan*
- Ethics: go through Indigenous processes first
- Agreements with partners **as part of project development discussions**

Thank you!

Questions?

E: lmidzaingobin@brocku.ca

Brock
University