

**Power and Protocols:
Conducting language research in US indigenous communities.**

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The history of interactions between researchers and tribal communities in the United States has been always been one of imbalance. For the first 100 years or more, researchers had the upper hand. They came, they often took what they needed and they left; the community having little to say about the process. Communities believed themselves to be the less powerful partner in the equation. The pendulum, however, has shifted; in most US indigenous communities, control is now squarely in the hands of the communities. Since the 1970's, on the heels of the Civil Rights movement, Indigenous communities have been in the process of becoming 'empowered'. There have been a number of examples where a little power proved to be a dangerous thing and resulted in legal repercussions for the researchers. Without achieving a better balance, both sides lose.

As this shift in power from researcher to community has been enacted, accompanying protocols have also shifted. In this presentation, I address the key elements in this shift which have impacted both researchers and communities working in language documentation, namely, the management of intellectual property and the determination of access to collected data. I will describe how power structures are defined for many indigenous communities and discuss who determines the development of relevant protocols. I argue for the importance of carefully crafted protocols, jointly agreed upon, prior to *any* research activities and note that this goes beyond the usual university-approved IRB requirements. Some questions that will be addressed are: How *do* we strike a reasonable balance that works for all interested parties? How do researchers negotiate this new space? How do communities enact research protocols? What does the future hold?