

Southwest Tribal Data Summit: Partnering with Southwest Indigenous Communities to Identify Data

CLIMAS Investigators: Stephanie Russo Carroll, Dan Ferguson, Sarah Leroy

Advisory Committee: Dominique David-Chavez (Borikén Taíno, Colorado State University); Andrew Curley (Diné, University of North Carolina); Sheldwin Yazzie (Diné, Albuquerque Area Southwest Tribal Epidemiology Center); Travis Lane (Diné, Inter Tribal Council of Arizona)

End Users: Tribes; other governments; researchers

Additional Resource Support: Native Nations Institute – Udall Foundation

Project Dates: 2017 – 2019

Summary of Impact

Strengthening collaboration: This project brought together Indigenous scholars, students, and professionals around Indigenous data sovereignty and Indigenous Knowledge on climate and the environment in the Southwest.

Advancing understanding of Indigenous data sovereignty: A 2018 summit convened by CLIMAS and the Native Nations Institute focused on defining and building shared knowledge around Indigenous data sovereignty and developing a network of people doing Indigenous community-driven climate resilience work. That summit prompted a second convening in 2019, leading to more informed discussions and collaborations around Indigenous knowledge, data governance, and climate resilience.

Supporting Indigenous-led research: Discussions and outcomes from this work have enabled early career Indigenous scholars to conduct research and advocate for policies that support Indigenous data sovereignty.

Impact on CLIMAS program: This work also influenced CLIMAS program operations offering training opportunities for CLIMAS researchers on Indigenous data sovereignty, and research governance, and ethical principles for working with Indigenous communities.

Problem Statement

Indigenous communities use data, information, and knowledge to make decisions about climate resilience. However, the way that data is collected, stored, and managed has implications for tribal sovereignty. The lack of Indigenous control over Indigenous data has resulted in: limited environmental data for tribal lands; data that do not reflect community values and needs; insufficient support for Indigenous rights for environmental self-determination; and extractive climate research practices that provide little direct benefit for Indigenous communities.

Climate and environmental science researchers who want to engage with Indigenous communities often have little knowledge of settler colonialism and its ongoing impact or

the harm caused by extractive research practices. Researchers need to adopt a responsible and ethical approach to research involving Indigenous communities that acknowledges past harms and prioritizes collaboration and mutual benefit.

Research Focus

This project focused on convening Indigenous scholars, students, and practitioners to discuss Indigenous data sovereignty, tribal data governance, and Indigenous Knowledge about climate resilience in the Southwest.

Project Activities

Advisory Committee: Regular meetings with conference Advisory Committee, comprised of early career Indigenous scholars in the Southwest.

Event planning: Conference planning, coordinating participant invitations, setting an agenda and overall event organization.

Communicating findings: Summarizing key outcomes and knowledge generated during the summit via a policy brief and presentations.

Project Outputs

Workshop:

Supporting Tribal Data Governance for Community Resilience: A Southwest Indigenous Climate Summit. 2018. University of Arizona. This summit brought together 35 participants to discuss Indigenous data sovereignty, tribal data governance, and Indigenous knowledge related to climate resilience efforts within Southwest Indigenous communities. Goals included: co-developing a workable understanding of “Indigenous data sovereignty” in the context of climate research and environmental health; building shared knowledge around data sovereignty; and developing a network of people focused on community-driven climate resilience work.

Presentations:

Supporting Tribal Data Governance for Community Climate Resilience: A Southwest Indigenous Climate Summit. 2018. American Geophysical Union Conference, Washington, DC.

On the need for Indigenous data sovereignty:

The very nexus of all our projects’ research is focused around the lack of Indigenous control of Indigenous data. That’s resulted in data that don’t meet the needs or the goals of Indigenous peoples. In this case it’s mostly with respect to climate, but also, broadly all of the other relevant data that you’d need. Either because the data are not available, there are access issues, or the wrong outcomes or things are monitored, that kind of stuff.

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Stephanie Russo Carroll, CLIMAS

Indigenous Data Sovereignty: How Scientists and Researchers Can Empower Indigenous Data Governance. 2018. American Indian Science and Engineering Society National Conference. Oklahoma City, OK.

Policy Brief:

David-Chavez, D., D.B. Ferguson, A. Curley, T. Lane, S. Yazzie, S. LeRoy, S.R. Carroll. 2019. [Policy Brief: Supporting Tribal Data Governance for Indigenous Community Climate Resilience](#). Tucson: Native Nations Institute and the Climate Assessment for the Southwest, University of Arizona. This brief summarizes the 2018 workshop and identified next steps for tribes, universities, federal agencies, and others who want to learn more about tribal interests and needs related to Indigenous data sovereignty in Arizona.

Leveraged Funding:

Supporting this project:

- Native Nations Institute, Udall Foundation (\$1,000)

Supporting new initiatives beyond this project:

- National Science Foundation – An Indigenous data governance approach for enhancing ethical research policies and practices (\$499,994)

Societal Impacts by Category

Conceptual, Connectivity, and Capacity Building:

- The 2018 Summit convened researchers, students, and practitioners to discuss Indigenous data sovereignty, tribal data governance, and Indigenous Knowledge in the context of climate resilience in the Southwest. These initial conversations raised awareness of Indigenous data sovereignty as an issue and explored its implications on Indigenous Knowledge, data governance, and climate research with Indigenous communities.
- A second Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit was held in 2019, in Tempe, AZ, to continue discussion on Indigenous data sovereignty. The lead organizations – Native Nations Institute, University of Arizona and the Inter Tribal Council of Arizona – conceptualized this event at 2018 Climate Summit.
- A third Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit was held virtually in 2020. [Data & Research Priorities for Southwest Tribal Climate Resilience Summit](#).

Capacity Building:

- Stephanie Russo Carroll has continued to work in Indigenous data sovereignty. She is co-lead of the U.S. Indigenous Data Sovereignty Network and chair of the Global Indigenous Data Alliance.
- Stephanie Russo Carroll co-founded the [Collaboratory for Indigenous Data Governance](#), which develops research, policy, and practice innovations for Indigenous data sovereignty.
- The summit’s advisory committee was comprised of four early career, native scholars from the Southwest.
- Inter Tribal Council of Arizona conducted a series of trainings about climate-related topics after the summit. Stephanie Carroll facilitated a training on data advocacy and capacity building.

On summit participation:

I really valued the opportunities to learn firsthand what others were doing within their communities to overcome barriers and challenges and to strengthen sovereignty and community health. These were the most inspiring and helpful interactions of the event.

—
Summit Participant

On the importance of Indigenous data sovereignty:

I believe it is important that traditional knowledge can be managed and used for scientific support. The political overtone of the United States Capital Beltway must be included with any discussion about data management so that it does not take control of the effort, the intent, and the outcome.

—
Summit Participant

Instrumental:

- This work directly impacted CLIMAS operations. Funding was included in the subsequent CLIMAS proposal for researchers to receive training on Indigenous data sovereignty principles and working with Indigenous communities.
- One summit advisory committee member, Dominique David-Chavez, received a new NSF Post-Doctoral award to work with Stephanie Carroll to investigate federal environmental guidelines and policies in relation to Indigenous data. This research informed funders and policy makers about Indigenous data sovereignty.