

Highlights and Key Lessons

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Principle	Addressing Conflicts of Interest in Research Funding

Key Highlights

- Explored how conflicts of interest in applied research often show up as subtle pressures from funders, partners, or institutions, not just financial ties.
- Used a Northern Saskatchewan housing case study to examine real-world ethical challenges including community consultation, data ownership, and influence over outcomes.
- Introduced five core values that support ethical research in complex settings: Trust, Transparency, Power, Integrity, and Reciprocity.
- Participants worked through the case from multiple perspectives — including community partners, funders, ethics advisors, and student researchers — to reflect on how competing priorities can be managed responsibly.
- Key takeaway: Ethical research doesn't mean avoiding tension. It means being thoughtful, clear, and accountable in how we manage it.

Focus of the Session:

Explored how to identify, disclose, and manage conflicts in applied research, emphasizing ethics as a lived practice rather than a checklist.

Key Framework

Five Anchors for Managing Conflicts:

1. **Trust** – Building relationships with communities and partners to sustain credibility.
2. **Transparency** – Acknowledging that conflicts of interest aren't inherently wrong; concealing them is.
3. **Power** – Recognizing power imbalances and ensuring inclusion in decision-making.
4. **Integrity** – Upholding honesty, even under pressure to present results favorably.
5. **Reciprocity** – Ensuring research benefits are shared; communities should experience value, not extraction.

Case Study: Pinehouse First Nation

- Highlighted complexities in community–industry partnerships (Cameco & Orano uranium mining).
- Raised questions around **conflict of interest, stakeholder input, and reciprocity** in research involving marginalized or impacted communities.

Key Learnings

1. **Conflict is Inevitable, Not Negative**

In applied research, managing conflict is part of the process—it reflects the complexity of real-world collaboration.

2. **Ethics Is an Ongoing Practice**

Ethical conduct evolves through conversations, consent processes, funding decisions, and mentorship—not static policy compliance.

3. **Transparency Builds Credibility**

Communities and partners value honesty over perfection, open communication fosters trust.

4. **Power Dynamics Must Be Acknowledged**

Ethical research requires questioning who speaks, who decides, and who benefits.

5. **Reciprocity Strengthens Relationships**

Applied research should give back—through capacity building, shared data, or community benefit.

6. **Integrity Protects Long-Term Impact**

Standing up to scrutiny and resisting external pressures preserves the credibility of both the researcher and the institution.