ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH

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PURPOSE

This policy brief outlines an Artificial Intelligence (AI) policy for those engaging with I-CREAte research projects and is intended to guide I-CREAte partner organizations and research team members.

MAIN MESSAGES

- **I-CREAte does not allow the use of open-source and generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT, Gemini, Microsoft Co-pilot) for any usage during research projects,** which includes the entry of research data and confidential information into any AI tools to support the development of summaries, research tools, analysis, or synthesis and the development of knowledge tools.
- **Challenges arise with AI in Indigenous and community-based research** due to cultural misrepresentation, data security, data sovereignty, environmental harm, and lack of critical thinking. Indigenous data should never be entered into AI tools.

I-CREATE'S POSITION STATEMENT:

I-CREAte does not allow the use of AI in its research activities. This position was informed by evidence-based considerations and guidance from the I-CREAte Core Research Team and the Community Advisory Board (CAB). It reflects our commitment to research integrity, confidentiality, data security, and building research capacity by encouraging team members to develop and apply their own research skills.

If you are a partner organization or team member with I-CREAte, any proposed use of AI in our work together must be discussed with and approved by the I-CREAte team before use.

CLOSING MESSAGES:

- **AI use is increasingly being promoted to support research**, specifically in grant proposal writing, qualitative research, and data analysis.
- **I-CREAte and the CAB does not allow AI in its research activities,** including Indigenous and community-based participatory action research.

BACKGROUND

AI refers to a computer system that performs tasks that require human-like reasoning, perception, or decision-making. This includes statistical models, machine learning models, generative models, and AI-powered tools.

I-CREAte is a community-based participatory action research group whose vision is to support community-led, equity-oriented, socially accountable and actionable research to support healthier, resilient communities. Given the nature of I-CREAte projects working with vulnerable communities and equity-oriented research, the introduction of AI presents a challenge. An evidence-based review of AI use in research, CAB consultation, and I-CREAte team discussions, guided the development of I-CREAte's position statement on AI as outlined above.

1 INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

I-CREAte works closely with Indigenous community members and researchers for Indigenous-led community projects. The following are key considerations on using AI for Indigenous research:

- **Conflict with Indigenous Epistemologies:** AI conflicts with Indigenous ways of knowing which are relational and connect people, land, and entities.[1]
- **Cultural Misrepresentation & Bias:** AI can amplify bias and stereotypes about Indigenous communities and cultures. [1]
- **Environmental Harm:** AI data centers contribute to environmental colonialism by using land, water, and energy resources near Indigenous communities. [1,2]
- **Data Security:** Concerns around data security and privacy are a barrier to AI adoption in Indigenous organizations. [3]
- **Threats to Indigenous data sovereignty:** There is uncertainty on how to apply Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®) principles in AI.[4]
- **Seven Generations:** CAB members recommended that AI use be guided by the seven generations principles. This principle considers the long-term impacts of entering data into AI systems and its potential effects on future generations.

2 COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH

I-CREAte works with community partners and members to facilitate community-driven research that is responsive to community needs. The following are key considerations on using AI for community-based research:

- **Community-centered Approach:** AI should serve community-defined goals and not be used for organizational efficiency or researcher convenience. [1,2]
- **Community-level Data:** Privacy and confidentiality were emphasized by CAB members as key priorities, with strong caution around entering community-level data into AI tools.
- **AI as a Supportive Tool:** AI should support not replace community voice, lived experience or human interpretation. [5–8]
- **Limitations of AI:** AI lacks critical thinking, reflexivity, and high-order cognitive capacities that humans have. Thus, it can create a false narrative in qualitative data analysis.[8]

CONCLUSION

The decision to not use AI is essential to protect the rights, privacy, and lived experiences of vulnerable communities involved in our research. We hope this brief helps I-CREAte research members, partner organizations, and communities to understand I-CREAte's decision on AI use in research.

Please direct questions to icreate@queensu.ca.

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