

Epolleo Indigenous Partnership and Benefit Policy
For the Epolleo Diversity Platform, Operated by Epolleo, Inc.
Effective Date: 7-1-2025

I. Purpose and Values

Epolleo recognizes Indigenous Peoples as original stewards of biodiversity, whose ancestral relationships with land, ecosystems, and microbial life form the foundation of sustainable innovation. This policy ensures that projects involving Indigenous lands or communities honor these relationships through meaningful participation, ethical safeguards, and lasting benefit. It sets a standard of respect, partnership, and transparency for all campaigns and screenings connected to Indigenous cultural and ecological domains.

II. Campaign Inclusion Requirements

All microbial collection or innovation campaigns occurring on or near Indigenous lands must:

- **Secure Tribal or Governance Consent:** Campaign organizers must formally engage with the community's recognized governance structure to discuss project goals and obtain consent. *This ensures that all activities proceed with the informed understanding and approval of the people whose land and knowledge may be involved.*
- **Integrate Indigenous Participation in All Phases:** Indigenous representatives must be included in the planning, development, and execution of campaigns. *This supports co-creation and ensures cultural sensitivity is embedded from the start.*
- **Culturally Map the Collection Region:** Projects must include documentation that acknowledges traditional names, boundaries, or zones linked to the Indigenous community. *This grounds the project in the geographic and cultural reality of the people connected to it.*
- **State a Community Benefit Intention:** Every campaign must articulate how the work is expected to benefit the Indigenous population involved. *This encourages upfront dialogue around mutual value and sets shared expectations.*

III. Sample Tagging and Tracking System

To distinguish and honor Indigenous-affiliated projects, Epolleo uses a sample tagging and reporting system:

- **#IndigBiodiversity Tag:** All samples connected to Indigenous lands or communities will be flagged with a standardized tag. *This identifier ensures visibility and traceability across Epolleo's databases.*
- **Global Visibility of Tag Data:** These samples will be highlighted in dashboards, reports, and communications. *This enables Indigenous communities and the public to identify projects that involve Indigenous partnerships.*
- **Linked Metadata Records:** Tags will be associated with specific tribal, regional, and consent information. *This supports transparency and enables informed decision-making at every review level.*

IV. Material Transfer Office Prioritization

When samples connected to Indigenous communities enter the innovation or licensing process:

- **Priority in MTA Review:** Indigenous-tagged samples will receive prioritized review for ethical screening and innovation opportunities. *This acknowledges the unique role of Indigenous communities in biological stewardship.*
- **Pathway to Co-Development Opportunities:** Indigenous participants may be invited to participate in research or commercialization processes. *This helps ensure that communities are included in downstream decisions and benefit from innovation development.*
- **Ethical Review Required:** Each MTA involving an Indigenous sample undergoes an added layer of review. *This provides safeguards against exploitation or misuse of culturally significant materials.*

V. Cultural and Community Benefits

Benefits from Indigenous-linked campaigns must be meaningful, measurable, and respectful:

- **Cultural Reinvestment:** Projects may support the preservation of language, ceremonial sites, or cultural mapping. *This ensures the science promotes cultural continuity.*
- **Environmental Restoration or Protection:** Efforts may involve habitat regeneration, improvements in soil health, or rewilding partnerships. *These actions restore ecosystems that sustain both biology and tradition.*
- **Health and Longevity Outcomes:** If innovation leads to therapeutics, wellness models, or regenerative health tools, communities must be invited into those benefits. *This supports tribal health sovereignty and wellness planning.*
- **Educational and Training Access:** Campaigns may offer internships, fellowships, or curriculum co-design. *This supports intergenerational capacity building.*
- **Community-Led Publications or Exhibits:** Indigenous voices will have opportunities to shape storytelling about the science. *This ensures narrative equity and visibility of Indigenous authorship.*

VI. Transparency and Reporting

To promote accountability and trust:

- **Public Project Listing:** All Indigenous-partnered campaigns will be flagged in the annual Epolleo transparency report. *This gives communities and observers visibility into activity and progress.*
- **Impact Summary Required:** Campaign leads must submit a plain-language statement outlining expected community impacts. *This promotes shared understanding and clarity on benefits.*
- **Regular Status Updates:** Campaign leaders will report progress on a biannual basis. *This enables the community and oversight bodies to monitor alignment with agreed outcomes.*

VII. Respectful Engagement and Consultation

All interactions with Indigenous communities should be governed by cultural competence and ethical care:

- **Use of Traditional Names and Languages:** Where appropriate and permitted, Indigenous place names and languages will be used in project documents. *This honors sovereignty and linguistic heritage.*
- **Community Voices in Project Narratives:** Indigenous leaders may contribute prefaces, statements, or stories. *This reflects cultural grounding in scientific work.*
- **Image and Story Consent:** Communities may opt-in or out of visual or narrative representation. *This protects cultural expression and ensures consent is explicit.*

VIII. Global Framework Alignment

This policy is aligned with global principles and standards, including:

- **UNDRIP:** Upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples as declared by the United Nations.
- **Nagoya Protocol:** Ensuring access and benefit-sharing from genetic resources.
- **TNFD LEAP:** Embedding Indigenous participation in nature-related financial disclosures. (<https://tnfd.global/recommendations/>)
- **UNESCO Safeguards:** Respecting intangible cultural heritage in all biocultural work.

IX. Enforcement and Platform Integration

To ensure meaningful implementation:

- **Compliance Is Required:** Campaigns that fail to meet this policy's expectations may be denied approval or removed from the platform. *This ensures the policy is not symbolic, but enforceable.*
- **Corrective Actions May Be Mandated:** Project teams may be asked to revise consent protocols or benefit plans. *This supports alignment rather than exclusion.*
- **Review Mechanisms Exist:** The Ethics and Science Oversight Committee will monitor compliance. *This provides a structured accountability process.*

X. Closing Commitment

Epolleo believes that the future of biodiversity stewardship must be built in partnership with the Indigenous communities whose ecological knowledge and practices continue to sustain life. We recognize that true collaboration requires humility, transparency, and systems that reward shared benefit.

This policy is one step in our long-term commitment to ensuring that microbial innovation is ethical, equitable, and inclusive. We welcome input, revision, and co-authorship from Indigenous sustainability leaders as this work evolves.