



Written by [Michael Tennant](#) on September 7, 2023

Science Now Includes “Indigenous Knowledge,” Says White House Science Office

The “follow-the-science” Biden administration is now using “Indigenous Knowledge” — a vague term encompassing virtually anything a Native American may believe — in its scientific assessments.

One of President Joe Biden’s earliest acts was to elevate the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) to Cabinet level, supposedly to “help restore [people’s] faith in America’s place on the frontier of science and discovery.”

However, according to the [Washington Free Beacon’s Joseph Simonson](#):



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On Nov. 30, 2022, that office did something rather unscientific: It issued a [memo](#) directing more than two dozen federal agencies to apply “Indigenous Knowledge” to “research, policies, and decision making.” The 42-page document encourages the agencies to speak with “spiritual leaders” and reject “methodological dogma” when crafting policy as a way to remedy injustices against Native peoples.

The memo further directed agencies to “include Indigenous Knowledge as an aspect of the best available science,” including in “Highly Influential Scientific Assessments,” i.e., those analyzing the potential impact of the costliest policies.

Simonson explained:

Federal regulators are to consider the folk wisdom of the Comanche Nation, for instance, just as they consider lab results when trying to determine the pH level of rain. Long relegated to university campuses and fringe activist groups, the idea that Native people have a privileged understanding of the physical and metaphysical world is now the official view of the United States government.

“When I start hearing things about how there’s this other dimension where, you know, the animals interact with humans at a different level of reality, that’s just not a thing. It’s not a scientific thing,” City University of New York Professor Massimo Pigliucci told Simonson. “You can believe that and you have the right to believe it, but it’s not empirical evidence.”

Canadian political scientist Frances Widdowson told Simonson that “the push to include Indigenous Knowledge in the policymaking process reflects ‘irrational beliefs’ that indigenous people are ‘noble savage[s]’ who have access to stores of wisdom that are out of reach for white people.”

“There’s not an ‘Indigenous Laws of Physics’ and a Laws of Physics,” she said. “There’s just the Laws of Physics.”



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Try telling that to the Biden administration. Simonson reported:

In addition to the Office of Science and Technology Policy memo, the White House has released more than [three dozen documents](#) that favorably cite Indigenous Knowledge. In one memo, the White House said Indigenous Knowledge is part of its “commitment to scientific integrity and knowledge and evidence-based policymaking.” In another, the White House said that science faces “limitations” given its refusal to incorporate Native religious principles.

Federal agencies have held [dozens](#) of [seminars](#) on the [topic](#) as well.

An April U.S. Geological Survey [webinar](#), for example, instructed federal regulators and scientists “to consider whether various food cultivation methods were considered sacred by a Native tribe,” wrote Simonson. “Failing to do so would ‘disrespect the spirits,’ said Melonee Montano, a traditional ecological knowledge outreach specialist for a consortium of native tribes.”

During a March 2022 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) webinar, senior OSTP official Gretchen Goldman “lamented ... that federal processes can be biased against ‘something that’s not a peer-reviewed academic document,’” penned Simonson.

“There are places we can, you know, just remove any barriers to fully incorporate Indigenous Knowledge into the process the same way that we would for academic science,” she said.

While it’s easy to ridicule these remarks, their underlying philosophy does pose serious risks. Who would want to drive across a federally funded bridge designed by a medicine man rather than an engineer? And what of the poor residents of Maui whose request for water to fight the recent fires was allegedly [delayed](#) for five hours while Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources Deputy Director M. Kaleo Manuel, a believer in incorporating “indigenous knowledge” into water-management policy, ensured that one downstream farmer would not be harmed by the diversion of water?

“This is extremely dangerous,” University of Southern California professor of science, engineering, and chemistry Anna Krylov told Simonson. “When I conduct experiments, I need to follow the rules and procedures and think about safety. I have to keep track of what I’m doing. I’m not thinking about chants or dancing.”

Of course, while the true believers in the Biden administration push this dangerous nonsense, others are just hoping to cash in on it. Simonson noted that one tribal-consortium employee at the EPA webinar “suggested paying tribal elders \$100 an hour to assist in federal rulemaking.”

Conveniently, nobody really knows what constitutes “Indigenous Knowledge.” “Nearly anything can be considered Indigenous Knowledge if it was declared so by a Native person,” observed Simonson. And the tribes apparently want to keep it that way:

Records obtained by the nonprofit organization [Liberty Unyielding](#) show that the United South and Eastern Tribes Sovereignty Protection Fund asked senior Biden administration officials to shield any Indigenous Knowledge from public access through mechanisms like Freedom of Information Act requests or “from being shared on publicly available maps, guides, or other online tools/databases.”



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One thing we do know, however, is that the “Indigenous Knowledge” movement will not end well. Canada tried doing the same thing late in the last century, “often with counterproductive results,” wrote Simonson. The real advantage to it, from the perspective of politicians, bureaucrats, and their allies, is that, according to a [2006 Canadian academic assessment](#), “the acceptance of spiritual beliefs as ‘knowledge’ by governments [can] be used to justify any activity.”



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