

**“I Think that We Have to be Okay with Saying Who We Are and Who We Are Not”*:
Indigenous Epistemologies, Methodologies, and Researcher Positionality in Canadian
Indigenous Research**

Jimena Márquez

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Faculty of Education
University of Ottawa

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* Kathy Absolon, expert consultant

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In 2020, at the mid-point of my PhD, the pandemic forced me to change the course of my research and to transition from a field-based Indigenous education research to a theoretical and methodological Indigenous research study. This unforeseen challenge ended up being the beginning of a wonderful journey.

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Abstract

Research in Indigenous contexts is strongly associated with colonialism (Smith, 1999). In response to this, Indigenous scholars have, in the last two decades, recentred research on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). This change marks the advent of an “Indigenous research paradigm” based on “an ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology that is Indigenous” (Wilson, 2008, p. 38). In recent years, this approach has gained momentum in Canada, making it a “fifth paradigm” and a sought-after research approach across disciplines (Chilisa, 2020, p. 19). This thesis seeks to better understand the evolution of Canadian Indigenous research across disciplines in the last two decades (1997–2020). Using a mixed-methods approach (western and Indigenous), I adopted Arksey and O’Malley’s (2005) scoping review methodology for the initial five steps and Kovach’s (2010) Indigenous conversational method for the final consultation step.

Based on the in-depth analysis of 46 Indigenous research studies, my findings indicate a notable increase in the number of collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners, especially in the last five years. This may signal the beginning of an era of reconciliation in research; however, my conversations with Indigenous scholars revealed that, in many cases, collaborations are tainted by tokenism and present many risks for Indigenous researchers. Indigenous research is principle-based, and its key principles are relationality, reciprocity, respect, and accountability. Indigenous scholars emphasized that the key to successful collaborations and to “good” Indigenous research is taking the time to build genuine relationships based on these principles. My research thus demonstrates that healthy and productive collaborative Indigenous research is possible, but only when there is relational accountability on the part of non-Indigenous partners. In sum, using a scoping review analysis and the Indigenous conversational method, this research has established that the marker of robust and valuable Indigenous research is congruency: the clear and explicit alignment between researchers’ positionalities, their epistemic frameworks, and the methodologies used to conduct the research.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Overview and Rationale of the Thesis

Since the late 1990s, in an effort to decolonize research, Indigenous scholars across the world have recentred research on Indigenous ways of knowing and doing (Castellano, 2004; Chilisa, 2020; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). This shift in the way that research is conducted in Indigenous communities marks the advent of an “Indigenous research paradigm” (Wilson, 2008, p. 35). Indigenous research distinguishes itself from other forms of research in that it “follows an ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology that is Indigenous” (Wilson, 2008, p. 38). Furthermore, Indigenous research, as a decolonizing approach, seeks to disrupt the colonial logic that still underlies many research perspectives and practices (Chilisa, 2020). Recently, there has been a growing interest in Indigenous knowledge systems and in decolonial studies, which has led this “fifth paradigm” to gain momentum among many types of researchers (Chilisa, 2020, p. 19). Paradoxically, this interest is also seen as “a rush on Indigenous knowledge systems, teachings and heritage” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 13) that potentially represents a threat to Indigenous knowledge, as it could become “commodified” in academic contexts (Battiste, 2008, p. 8).

The recent interest in Indigenous research within the context of qualitative research raises the issue of whether an Indigenous research paradigm is right for everyone. When a researcher chooses an Indigenous framework, are they always able to follow the principles of respect, relationality, and reciprocity set out by Indigenous scholars? The main difficulty of Indigenous research lies in “walking the talk” or in equating the practice of Indigenous research with its elevated epistemological and ethical principles. Therefore, if Indigenous research is to empower Indigenous people, then non-Indigenous researchers must share decisional power and conduct

research ethically for the benefit of Indigenous communities (Battiste, 2008; Battiste & Henderson, 2000). Is this, however, always being done? Moreover, Indigenous knowledge systems are *embodied* and actualized through a web of relationships that entail rights and responsibilities; they must be learned and understood from an Indigenous perspective (Battiste, 2008). In practice, this requires that researchers invest their own time in relationship building even before their research starts. Is it always possible for them to do this?

In recent years, the “what,” “why,” and “how” of Indigenous methodologies have been extensively written (Archibald & Smith, 2019; Chilisa, 2020; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). However, this methodological discussion has failed to include the equally important conversation concerning researcher positionality, so it remains unclear, “who” can undertake research founded on an Indigenous epistemology and methodology. It is imperative to consider researcher positionality in Indigenous research; because good research is characterized by inner coherence, it is important to align the personal epistemological and theoretical stance of the researcher with that used in the research (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009).

Considering these questions, this thesis sets out to examine how the principles of Indigenous research have been applied over the last ten to twenty years in Canadian scholarship. Understanding that this would require an examination of the diverse epistemological frameworks and methodological approaches used, a consideration of researcher positionality, and the alignment of these three elements, I set out to map the field of recent Indigenous research in Canada. The aim of study is ultimately to help identify clear criteria by which to assess Indigenous research and to develop strategies to help Indigenous communities examine the research projects that are proposed to them. The importance of positionality in Indigenous research cannot be underestimated. As this is one of the focus points of this thesis, I will begin with my own location and positionality.

My Background and Positionality in Relation to Indigenous Research

Growing up in Mexico and Encountering the Wixárika People

Positionality statements promote transparency and rigour by acknowledging the author's background and worldview and how they may impact the research (Carter et al., 2014; Martin, 2017). Due to the interpretative nature of this research, it is crucial for me to analyze my own history with Indigenous peoples, which, in turn, makes me more available to listen to others' stories (Carter et al., 2014). Additionally, an important component of this study was engaging in dialogue with Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, so it is important for the reader to understand my relationships to Indigenous peoples prior to starting this thesis.

I was born and grew up in Mexico City. I am a first-generation Mexican only by place of birth. On my father's side, I am Spanish. My paternal grandparents came to Mexico in the late 1930s, fleeing the Spanish Civil War (1936–39). Along with thousands of other Spanish refugees who were socialists, intellectuals, and artists, my grandparents participated in the creation of a thriving exiled Spanish society in Mexico City. My father was born and grew up in this culture with the promise of someday returning to Spain. On my mother's side, I am French. My mother's ancestors are from Alsace (a part of France that was German for a long time). She left France to do her doctoral studies in Wisconsin, US. My parents met in the US when they were both doing their PhDs, and they married and came to Mexico in 1973.

To the question, "who are my people?" I should answer that they are Spanish and Alsatian. Having never lived on those lands, I feel, in many ways, like an outsider. On the other hand, while I have no Mexican roots and thus will always be a foreigner, my sense of belonging there is very strong and has been built over time through experiences and relationships. My paternal grandmother used to say how Mexico had adopted her in her time of need; I can relate to that

feeling of being an adopted child of Mexico. I know that I am connected to the lands of my “biological” family, yet I feel most at home on the lands that adopted my family. In my own life, I repeated my parents’ story of immigration when I came to do my studies in Canada and stayed here. For the last 23 years, I have made Montreal my home, which is longer than the time I lived and grew up in Mexico.

As this is an inquiry into the nature and scope of Indigenous research in Canada, the first thing to consider is where my interest in this subject comes from. To answer this, I must explain how, as a child growing up in a very Eurocentric, western, privileged environment, I encountered the Wixárika people of the western Sierra Madre. This sort of encounter does not happen by accident, as one does not simply stumble upon Wixárika people in Mexico.

To put things in perspective, let us consider that Mexico has a population of about 126 million people (INEGI, 2020), of which only 16 million are considered Indigenous (13.5%). There are approximately 7 million Indigenous people whose first language is not Spanish (INEGI, 2020). The Wixárika people (also known by the term Huichol) are part of this category. There are about 44,000 Wixárika people living mainly in the western Sierra Madre, their traditional territory, and in some neighbouring cities according to the *Instituto Nacional de los Pueblos Indígenas* (INPI, 2020). The point is that there are relatively few Wixárika people in Mexico, and the way one gets to meet them and learn from them is by purposefully going to their homeland.

I was 12 years old when I first went to visit the village of San Andres Cohamiata or *Tatei’kie* during the celebration of *Semana Santa* (Easter) of 1992. My mother and I had come there by invitation and were part of a larger convoy that was repatriating a Wixárika religious figure. The *santito* called *Hapaxuki* had been stolen from a Wixárika altar during the *Cristero* war (1926–1929) so that it would not be destroyed by the anti-religious nationalist government forces.

Thereafter, it lay hidden in the house of a non-Indigenous person in Guadalajara for “safe keeping.” This person did not return the religious figure at the end of the war. It was only decades later that the family of this long-deceased person was finally giving the figure back to its people. This homecoming would occur at the important ritual time of Semana Santa. My mother was invited to participate in this event because she was the good friend of the main non-Indigenous person responsible for returning this religious figure: Rocio Echevarria. She is a nurse and a fierce advocate of Wixárika rights. She lived many years in Tatei’kie and later established a home and shelter for Wixárika families living in Guadalajara know as *Casa Huichol*. This is how Rocio was contacted by the family of the deceased person to help return Hapaxuki. As there was to be a great feast and celebration in the village to mark this return, she called upon her friends to help her make the trip to the Sierra. The journey was also guided by Don Chema, a Wixárika shaman (*mara’akame*) and a long-time friend of Rocio.

About 20 people, including my mom and me, showed up at Rocio’s home in Guadalajara in March 1992; five vans were loaded up with offerings (cloth, tequila, tobacco, and candles for the rituals), food, and fuel, and we set out on the journey to the Sierra. It took almost three days to get there. Don Chema oversaw Hapaxuki and led the convoy through narrow dirt roads. He also had us stop and camp at certain places where it was appropriate to make offerings so that the deity that we carried would be recognized by the land and could make a proper entry back into its territory. When we finally got to Tatei’kie, we waited at the outskirts of the village. Everyone came out to greet their saint with great excitement; there were dances, chants, and even cries. Rocio and Don Chema handed over to the traditional authorities of Tatei’kie, in a solemn gesture of repatriation, the long-lost figure of Hapaxuki. We also handed over the offerings and our contribution to the feast. We were thanked, given a place to camp by the river, and invited to stay

for the duration of the Semana Santa celebrations (the story of this hybrid figure and how it was stolen and returned is the focus of my master's thesis; Marquez, 2007).

Without going further into the details of this memorable trip, I can say that this direct experience of Wixárika culture as a child had a lasting impact on me. I had only ever seen Indigenous peoples as poor and destitute families begging on the street corners of Mexico City. Here, I witnessed the opposite. They were proud and strong, and they were nestled in and protected by the Sierra Madre. The Wixárika culture was also strikingly vibrant: the colors, the music, the all-night chants, the dances, and the animal sacrifices. The multiplicity of synchronous rituals happening around the clock in this small village during this one week made a great impression on me. I wrote daily in a journal and wanted to understand what was going on around me. I remember feeling included in the celebration because Don Chema was always with us, explaining what visitors could and could not do (for example, it is not allowed to take pictures during Semana Santa) and how they could participate respectfully in the celebration without getting in the way. The few of us that were children could go nearly anywhere and visit anyone, as children are considered ritually pure in Wixárika culture and so have few restrictions to follow during Semana Santa.

What I learned and saw during that first of many visits to Tatei'kie is that the most important thing in Wixárika life is following *el Costumbre*, which means “walking in the footsteps of the ancestors.” This visit was akin to entering a new world, one that followed a completely different logic than the materialistic world I was growing up in. It was governed by different rules and had different priorities. From a child's perspective, this world seemed magical in all regards. There seemed to be no distinctions between inanimate objects and people: the fire was affectionately called “grandfather” and was worshipped and sung to; animals were also sung to

and thanked for their sacrifice. I had never seen such a close knitted community or one in which the leaders were old and young medicine men. They were in charge of everything, taking care of the mundane and the spiritual, as Denis Lemaistre (2003) puts it:

If we were to fly over the Sierra at night, there would many tiny red dots scattered all over, like lit cigarettes shining in the night. These signal the shamans, chanting all-night, each around a single fire in the dead of night. They are awake when all are asleep. They keep ‘watch’ over their people, they ‘see’ in darkness what others cannot see, they ‘converse’ with the Spirits. (my translation, p. 183–184)

When I was 16, I was old enough to go to the Sierra without my mother. I met Rocio in Guadalajara and accompanied her to Tatei’kie. In addition to the importance of the first trip, it is significant to point out that my western upbringing led to my initial interest in Indigenous peoples because they are mostly invisible in Mexico, especially in big cities. I was raised mostly by my mother after my parents divorced. My mother was a university professor of sociology, and, as such, she was an ardent feminist and advocate of social justice. She was keenly aware of the struggles of Indigenous peoples in Mexico and was always denouncing the deeply rooted racism and classism that exists in Mexican society. Her own interests had led her to support Rocio on that initial trip, as the principle of repatriation of a stolen Indigenous object appealed to her. While she was not really interested in going back, she willingly let me go back as much as I wanted to. I did so each year throughout high school and even into university. In this way, I got to see the elaborate Semana Santa rituals and help in the preparations of food and decorations over and over. I also got to meet and stay with various Wixárika families in the village. These repeated trips created relationships with community members, as well as with some non-Indigenous people who worked with the Wixárika people.

Continuing Relationships, Research, and Teaching

When I came to Canada to pursue my undergraduate studies, I chose religious studies and anthropology. For my master's, I chose cultural anthropology and centred my research on the story of Hapaxuki, for which I did six weeks of fieldwork (Marquez, 2007; Marquez & Paradis, 2012). When I came back to San Andres as a “researcher,” it was both strange and familiar. I brought consent forms and questionnaires, as I was supposed to, but it was obvious that my research was possible only because I had already been there many times and had prior relationships. Additionally, my thesis would not be based only on those six weeks of observations and conversations but rather would incorporate my observations and experiences from prior years. As a young researcher, I felt comfortable there because people knew and trusted me, welcomed me into their homes, and agreed to participate willingly. They appreciated and were proud that I was writing the story of their santito, and in exchange for their stories, they also asked things of me, such as that I contribute to the fiestas and that I buy certain offerings for the rituals. This was normal, as we were in reciprocal relationships.

Looking back on my anthropological research, I can safely say that it was based completely on my western anthropological training. In this way, it was very much a study *of* Indigenous religion using a western theoretical lens. At the same time, it was also deeply relational, reciprocal, and respectful and was miles away from “helicopter research” which describes the way some investigators “‘fly in,’ collect data and ‘fly out’ with little, if any, interaction with the community” (Hodge, Weinman and Roubideaux, 2000, p. 43 as cited in Windchief, 2020, p. 61). This research was also my way of giving back to the Wixárika people by adding to the already existing body of literature that emphasizes the value and strength of Wixárika culture as a dynamic and distinct Indigenous culture in Mexico. This kind of research had already helped Wixárika people fight

assimilation policies and debunked the idea that Indigenous peoples in Mexico are “living fossils” stuck in the past, in need of “civilizing”.

Living in Canada, on the lands of the Haudenosaunee people, I continue to work for the revalorization of Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems through my work. As a CEGEP teacher (2008–2018), I have used my courses to teach students about Indigenous issues in Canada and Mexico. I have also supported Indigenous students coming into post-secondary education. For example, in 2017, the culturally relevant *Nunavik Sivunitsavut* program was launched in collaboration with John Abbott. I was very happy to be able to support this program for the benefit of Inuit students. Therefore, I consider myself as an “Indigenist” ally, explained by Battiste (2013) as “a movement that works collaboratively towards Indigenous peoples’ goals for sovereignty and self-determination ... These must not be the agenda of Indigenous peoples alone. Non-Indigenous allies must support them as well, although they may have different trajectories for how they enter the discussion, such as diverse disciplines, organizations, and research foci” (p. 74).

This thesis is in continuation of and connected to the research I did many years ago in Tatei’kie. It is a critical reflection on what it means and what is required to do research from an Indigenous perspective, using the lens of Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies. My hope is that in answering these questions for myself, my work will also help other researchers navigate the complexities of Indigenous ways of doing research and assist them in deciding if this approach is right for them.

Outline of the Thesis

Following this introduction, **Chapter Two** presents an overview of the literature on Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies, as well as a discussion of the concept of researcher positionality. Surveying the works of Indigenous scholars, the literature review defines and

discusses each element on its own and then examines how they interact and are connected to each other using the organic metaphor of a Tree. The conceptualization of Indigenous research as a Tree is culturally relevant and allows the reader to appreciate the holistic nature of Indigenous research. The principles and elements presented in the literature review establish the foundational knowledge through which the scoping review can be understood.

Chapter Three is the textual component of the scoping review. It presents a detailed analysis of the epistemological frameworks and the methodologies used, as well as a discussion of researcher positionality in 46 multidisciplinary Indigenous research studies spanning from 1997 to 2020. This scoping analysis was done using the five-step scoping methodology outlined by Arksey and O'Malley (2005). **Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven** divide into four separate chapters the sixth and final step of the scoping review: the consultation phase (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). This phase consisted of establishing dynamic dialogues with Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers on the nature of Indigenous research to ponder its evolution in the last ten to twenty years. This phase of the research was conducted using Margaret Kovach's (2010) Indigenous conversational method and was done once the first step was completed.

In more detail, **Chapter Four** presents the methodology for the Indigenous conversational method and discusses the steps taken to create meaningful dialogues with researchers. Furthermore, **Chapter Four** introduces each Indigenous researcher and presents the thematic analysis of the conversations with them, discussing the two main overarching themes of "relationships" and "positionality." These themes cover the topics discussed in the scoping review under the categories of "Indigenous epistemologies," "Indigenous methodologies," and "researcher positionality." The insights presented in this chapter respond directly to the results presented in the scoping review and push further the discussion of these themes.

Chapter Five delves into the topic of the evolution of Indigenous research in academic milieux. This chapter goes beyond the textual analysis presented in the scoping review and looks specifically at the experience of Indigenous researchers within Canadian institutions. This chapter also examines how academic milieux have changed in response to the expansion of Indigenous research. This chapter surpasses the scoping review findings because, whereas the textual analysis of Indigenous research can present only certain hypotheses regarding the past and future direction of Indigenous research, this chapter gathers significant insider information from Indigenous researchers and outlines clearly the evolution of Indigenous research over the past decades.

Chapter Six defines the concept of “congruency” and its meaning in the context of Indigenous research. This chapter recapitulates how Indigenous researchers responded to and encouraged the idea of developing a conceptual tool to assess the quality and validity of Indigenous research. This chapter builds on the initial idea, presented in the scoping review, that good qualitative research needs to manifest “internal coherence.” This chapter goes beyond the scoping the review to present a conceptual strategy for evaluating Indigenous research based on the conversations with Indigenous researchers.

Finally, **Chapter Seven** builds on the preceding chapters and presents all the themes discussed previously (relationships, positionality, the evolution of Indigenous research, and congruency) from the perspectives of non-Indigenous scholars. These conversations are presented separately from the conversations with Indigenous researchers because they constitute a different perspective on Indigenous research, from the positionality of Settler Canadians, and therefore require their own chapter. These conversations are important to include in this thesis on Indigenous research because many non-Indigenous researchers are engaging in this form of research. Although this chapter represents a different perspective, it strongly echoes the conversations with Indigenous

scholars and reaffirms the principles of Indigenous research through the voices of allies. Lastly, this chapter sheds light on the dynamics of good collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars and reaffirms that congruency cannot be expected only of Indigenous researchers but must be present in the Indigenous research conducted by all researchers.

Chapter Two: Literature Review of Indigenous Research in a Canadian Context

Introduction: The Tree as a Symbolic Representation of Indigenous Research

To explain the different components of Indigenous research and their interconnectedness, I use a symbolic representation. Metaphors are especially useful in research as they “create mental images that can align discontinuities into cultural and contextual meaning. In other words, metaphors help humans understand abstract concepts in concrete terms” (Salmón, 2012, p. 73). For this literature review, I use the image of a Tree, as illustrated by figure 1, as a thinking tool to represent the components, qualities, and characteristics of Indigenous research. As an organic metaphor, the image of a Tree allows for reflection on processes and cycles. In this way, like a sapling that grows and develops based on the nutrients in the ground and the sunlight available, so has Canadian Indigenous research grown and evolved in a specific academic and political environment. Like a complex living organism, Indigenous research has had to adapt to the changing conditions of its environment. Moreover, a tree is rooted in a specific place, so this metaphor also allows me to discuss how the Indigenous cultures and peoples of Canada have molded Indigenous research within a Canadian context. In sum, the Tree metaphor shows that Indigenous research is more than the sum of its parts; it is also the relationships that exist between these parts and with the surrounding environment, all considered within a specific timeframe.

In addition, the Tree metaphor is culturally relevant, as it is a meaningful symbol in many Indigenous cultures (Castellano, 2004; Estrada, 2005). The Tree is therefore also a multivocal symbol that “offers a glimpse into the most fundamental values of a culture” (Salmón, 2012, p. 73). For example, Mohawk scholar Marlene B. Castellano (2004) uses a tree metaphor to explain how the different levels and aspects of an Indigenous cultural system work together:

The leaves represent individual behaviors. Protocols and community customs are small branches, while ethics, the rules governing relationships, are the large branches. Values, deeply held beliefs about good and evil, form the trunk of the tree. The worldview or perception of reality, underpinning life as it is lived, like the roots of the tree, is not ordinarily visible. The whole tree is rooted in the earth that supports us. In this symbolic representation, I suggest that the earth is like the unseen world of spirit – vast, mysterious and friendly if we learn how to respect the laws that govern it. (p. 100)

Mayan researcher Estrada (2005) uses, more precisely, the Tree of Life drawn from the *Popol Vu* (Mayan epistemology) to symbolize and explain her methodology. Inspired by these scholars, among others, I use the Tree metaphor to shed light on the relationships between Indigenous epistemologies, Indigenous methodologies, and researcher positionality, while simultaneously considering cycles and processes connected to the temporal and spatial parameters of the Canadian context.

The Roots of the Tree and the Soil

An organic metaphor incorporates time; therefore, I start from the seed of the Tree and consider the conditions of its emergence. A seed germinates beneath the surface and needs rich soil. The roots are the first to grow out of the seed, going deep into the soil looking for moisture and nutrients. Only after they are somewhat developed does the stem appear above ground and grow toward the sunlight. The roots of the Tree of Indigenous research and the soil that nourishes them represent two different things. The rich soil that allowed for the germination and eventual emergence of an Indigenous research paradigm in Canada are the diverse Indigenous cultures of this land. These are the place-based cultures (Battiste, 2000; Salmón, 2012) whose values and ethos lie beneath the surface, deep in the earth, unseen but present (as suggested by Castellano's

metaphor). These cultures and communities are also where historically non-Indigenous/colonial research has taken place. Therefore, metaphorically speaking, this soil has the proper mix of nutrients that enabled the emergence of the second aspect of this metaphor, the roots: a new way of conducting research, an Indigenous way that seeks “to decolonize, to transform, to mobilize and to heal through research” (Smith, 1999, p. 144). Many of these Indigenous communities were and are unhappy with Eurocentric research. Indigenous research is therefore, at once, deeply rooted in specific Indigenous place-based cultures that provide its epistemological backbone and simultaneously anchored in the historical consciousness that it is time for Indigenous voices to be heard in research.

Consequently, in the first subchapter, “Roots,” I present the historical background that led to the emergence of Indigenous research in general and then, more specifically, of Indigenous research in Canada, as well as some of the cultures that have supported this emergence.

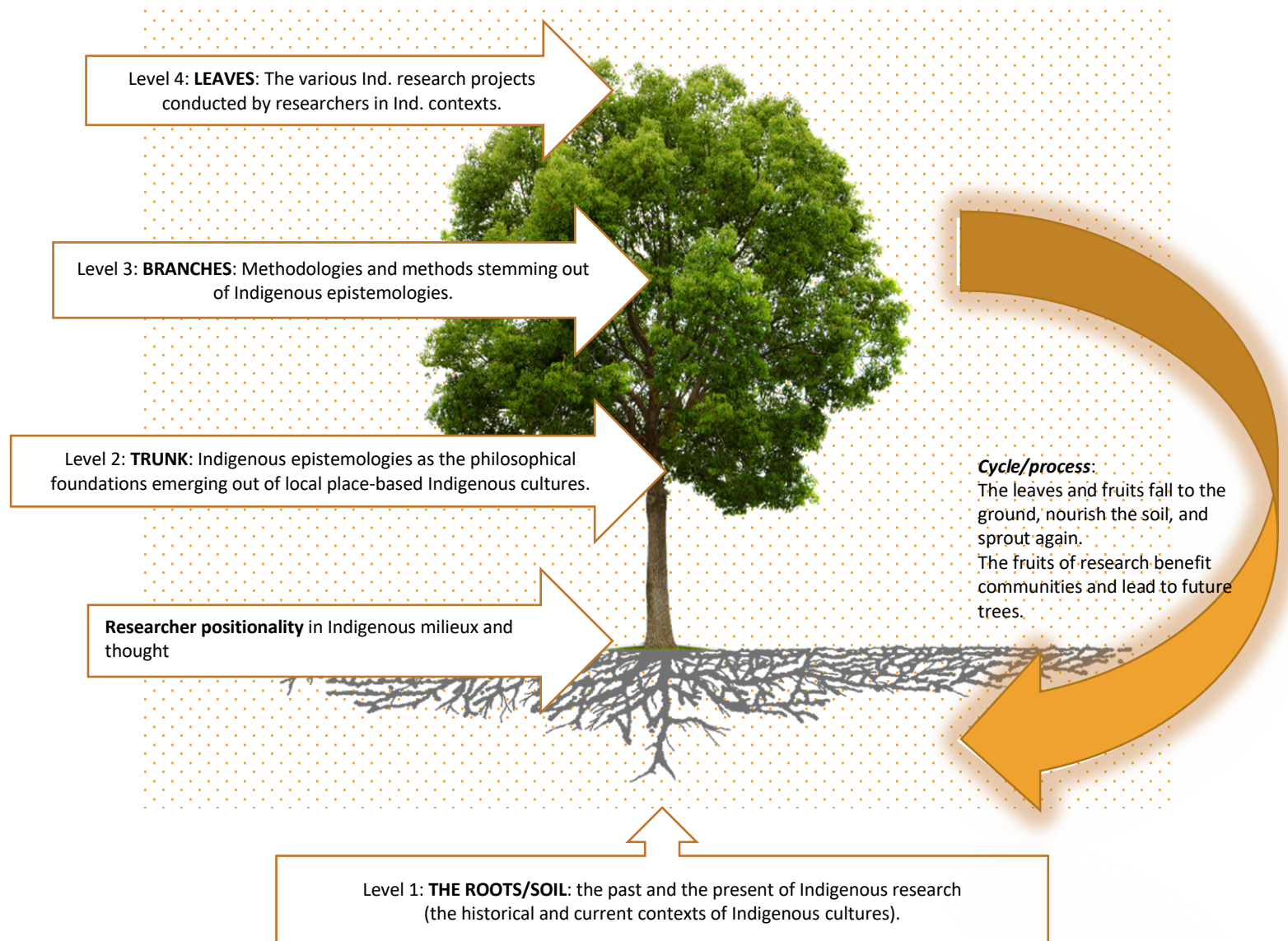
The Trunk

Figuratively, the trunk is a pillar. In Mayan mythology, for example, a tree is the central vertical axis that supports the world: “the *Ceiba*, or the axis, from which all life emanates, and through which all life passes” (Jiménez Estrada, 2016, p. 47). In this metaphor, the trunk represents the central axis of Indigenous cultures: the epistemologies or knowledge systems that support Indigenous worldviews. These systems arise out of the rich soil of Indigenous place-based cultures, worldviews, and languages; as such, they are the support or backbone of Indigenous research (Kovach, 2009; Ritenburg et al., 2014; Wilson, 2008). The trunk also represents the central unifying principles of Indigenous epistemologies. This means that, even if there are multiple Indigenous epistemologies rooted in diverse cultures, they share some common core principles, which have been elucidated by numerous Indigenous scholars (Cajete, 2000; Castellano, 2004;

Hart, 2010; Kovach, 2009; Meyer, 2008; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Consequently, in the second subchapter, “Trunk,” I discuss in detail some of these main principles, such as relationality (Wilson, 2008) or “kincentricity” (Salmón, 2012). I also discuss how Indigenous epistemologies are sometimes similar to but ultimately different from western epistemologies.

Figure 1

The Tree of Indigenous Research



The Branches

The branches of a tree extend out of the trunk; they are a continuation of it. In this case, they represent Indigenous methodologies as the data-gathering methods that are in alignment with the core principles of Indigenous epistemologies. These methodologies are coherent and consistent with Indigenous values and worldviews and ensure the relational accountability of Indigenous research, which implies respect, collaboration, accountability, reciprocity, and researcher reflexivity (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). As branches, the methods used to gather data on the field are also multiple and seem to go in various directions, but they remain connected to the trunk. In practice, this means that Indigenous methodologies are coherent and culturally relevant and support the self-determination of Indigenous peoples (Smith, 1999). Consequently, in the third subchapter, “Branches,” I discuss how Indigenous methodologies are based on Indigenous knowledge creation and transmission principles. Furthermore, I situate them within the landscape of qualitative research.

The Leaves

The leaves and the fruits are what the Tree gives back. The fruits and leaves fall to the ground, decompose, and replenish the earth. In this metaphor, they are the concrete, beneficial outcomes of community-based Indigenous research projects conducted according to an Indigenous research paradigm. The principles of reciprocity and accountability of Indigenous research bring about constant renewal based on a cycle of giving and receiving. Indigenous research is cyclical: it is rooted in and nourished by Indigenous place-based cultures, but it also gives back directly to these Indigenous cultures and communities in the form of beneficial and relevant research. What this means, metaphorically speaking, is that the fruits of this Tree are not meant to be picked up and loaded into university or institutional “trucks” and sold on the “marketplace” of knowledge.

They are meant to go back to the earth. Otherwise, the opposite of renewal occurs: there is a depleting of the earth and of the Tree, preventing replenishment from taking place. This cycle of renewal in Indigenous research is what connects the past to the future: ancient knowledge systems are revitalized when they are embodied in methodologies that are the bases of research projects that are beneficial to communities. This is how the process of epistemic revitalization leads to healing through research. In this literature review, I do not discuss the multiple Indigenous research projects that do this because they are the focus of the scoping review.

Researcher Positionality

Researcher positionality regards location, purpose, and intention. It is related to the question, “Who is conducting Indigenous research?” Researcher positionality lies on the ground, it can be at the surface level or deep in the earth, it is changing because it is related to the situatedness of researchers within Indigenous cultures, communities, and epistemologies. Whether researchers are Indigenous or not, where they situated themselves is crucial to the research conducted. Location and situatedness are not static or essential categories. Location and positionality are fluid and depend on experience, relationships, memory, contexts, and many other factors. The discussion of researcher positionality relates directly to Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies since these three topics are connected and interdependent. In this way, the last subchapter discusses how Indigenous researchers describe position and how this impacts how Indigenous research is conducted.

The Tree of Indigenous Research

The Roots and Soil

The Historical Emergence of Indigenous Research in Indigenous Place-based Cultures: The Background.

Wilson (2008) identifies five stages in the history of research done in Indigenous contexts. Briefly, these are “The *Terra Nullis* Phase” (1770–1900), “The Traditionalist Phase” (1900–1940), “The Assimilationist Phase” (1940–1970), “The Early Aboriginal Research Phase” (1970–1990), and finally “The Indigenist Research Phase” (1990 to present) (p. 45–52). These phases are important because they are the baggage of research in Indigenous contexts and ultimately led to the emergence of Indigenous research around the world and in Canada.

Succinctly, the first phase corresponds to research done with the intent of controlling, cataloguing, and mapping out the “New World” (Wilson, 2008, p. 45). Indigenous peoples were not of much scientific interest, as they were seen as being part of the natural environment. In the second phase, there was a change in attitude, with a growing interest in Indigenous peoples as “primitive human life forms” or “savages” to be studied. For example, in his book *The Golden Bough* (1890), Frazer (1854–1941) explained that human belief systems progressed through stages, going from the most “primitive” to the most “advanced,” culminating in western science. Research during this period was extremely skewed by Eurocentrism and racism and was preoccupied mostly with measuring this “human progress” (Smith, 1999). It is also during this period that the concept of the “Noble Savage.” Indigenous cultures were seen as relics of an Edenic past and as such as “pure” but fragile: “They [anthropologists] depicted Indigenous peoples as members of harmonious, internally homogenous, unchanging cultures. From such a perspective, Indigenous knowledge and heritage appeared to ‘need’ progress” (Battiste, 2000, p. 31).

During the third phase, non-Indigenous “experts” flourished in universities across the world. Their research focused mostly on the interpretation, analysis, and theorization of Indigenous cultures. From physical measurements of intelligence, research moved on to mapping kinship and social structures and recording mythology. This process cemented what is referred to as the “traditional Indigenous identity” in social science scholarship (Wilson, 2008, p. 49). Furthermore, the direct voice of Indigenous peoples “seems unnecessary” in this phase because what was deemed most important in these studies were social theories and not the anthropological experiences or points of view of local peoples (Wilson, 2008, p. 49).

Fourth, in the “early Aboriginal stage,” Indigenous researchers trained in western social sciences started to conduct their own research but still “through western eyes and ears” (Wilson, 2008, p.50). Finally, the last stage marks a definite shift in power relations between Indigenous communities and governing institutions. Indigenous peoples are demanding that research be conducted *with* them, in accordance with their worldviews and ethics (Castellano, 2004; Chilisa, 2020; Wilson, 2008). This shift is intrinsically linked to the political context of the 1990s, during which several countries, such as New Zealand, Australia, and Canada, held investigations and commissions on the nature of relationships between Indigenous peoples and government institutions. For example, Smith (1999) explains how, in the aftermath of the Treaty of Waitangi Amendment Act (1985) in New Zealand, Māori people started to conduct their own research as part of the continuing struggle for land restoration. This is also the phase in which Indigenous scholars were taking ownership of their standpoints and “no longer allow others to speak in their place” (Wilson, 2008, p. 51).

The Emergence of Indigenous Research in Canada.

Since the 1990s, many Canadian Indigenous scholars have taken up the task of articulating their own Indigenist perspectives and Indigenous worldviews through their research (Wilson, 2008, p. 51). This came out of the political context of the 1990s. In 1996, The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) challenged the Canadian government to review its relationship with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people (Wilson, 2008). RCAP pushed the federal government to recognize the negative impacts of colonization on Indigenous peoples. RCAP marks a time when “the climate had begun to shift” and a more collaborative approach to research emerged in which there was now space “to hear an Indigenous voice” (Wilson, 2008, p. 51).

After RCAP, in 1998, Canada made a Statement of Reconciliation to residential school survivors for the first time. In 2005, the Assembly of First Nations, under Grand Chief Phil Fontaine, launched a class action lawsuit against the federal government. As a settlement in that case, the Government of Canada signed the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement in 2006. Included within the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement was the mandate for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). The TRC began its work on June 1, 2008. The overall goals of the TRC focused on the promotion of healing, educating and listening and the preparation of a report for all parties that included recommendations for the Government of Canada regarding the Indian Residential School system, experience, and legacy. The TRC released an interim report in May 2015 and its final report in December 2015. The final TRC report contains 94 Calls to Action (2015) that concretely show the way to “redress the legacy of residential schools and advance the process of Canadian reconciliation” (p.1). Finally, in 2017, the National Canadian Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls was launched, and its final report was published in 2019.

The insufficient and imperfect efforts that the Canadian government has made to reconcile with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people has led, over the last 25 years, to increased overall academic interest in Indigenous issues. Especially in the last six years, since the TRC report and its Calls to Action came out, educational institutions across the country have made it part of their strategic plan to foster and fund Indigenous research.

During this current period, numerous Indigenous researchers have asserted Indigenous theories and methodologies rooted in their own cultural perspectives and experiences, fueled by the need to overcome the colonial research legacy (Kovach, 2009). In this way, Canadian Indigenous research arises out of the specific local contexts of the original cultures of this land. Canadian Indigenous research is Mi'kmaq research, Cree research, Anishinaabe research, Inuit research, Métis research, and Haudenosaunee research, to name just a few Canadian Indigenous research approaches. Canadian Indigenous research is not universal and cannot be uprooted or exported. It is in dialogue with Māori research or Sami research, as they have common experiences of colonization, but all of these Indigenous approaches are place-based and valid in local contexts.

Lastly, with the popularization of Indigenous research and the overall revalorization of Indigeneity in academia in the current phase, we also see the proliferation of Indigenous research projects that are not Indigenous. Indeed, many research projects label themselves as Indigenous research to attract funding but do not really conform to its principles. This phenomenon is explored further in the scoping review.

The Trunk: Indigenous Epistemologies

Indigenous epistemologies emerge out of the multiple Indigenous place-based cultures found across the world. In this Tree, they represent the trunk, the vertical axis; they are the

knowledge systems that support Indigenous worldviews and out of which research methodologies branch out.

The terms “Indigenous knowledge” and “traditional ecological knowledge” do not refer to the knowledge of a homologous category of Indigenous people in Canada (Battiste, 2000; Bell, 2013a; V. Deloria, 2006; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Salmón, 2012). Indigenous cultural knowledge is also not to be romanticized as a “stationary, prehistoric, and unchanging” body of knowledge (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008, p. 11). Indigenous knowledge systems are plural, dynamic, relational, and context specific (Bell, 2013a; Castellano, 2000; Ermine, 1999; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). They grow out of and are rooted in diverse ecosystems and are articulated in distinct Indigenous languages (Battiste, 1995; 2000; Bell, 2013a; Castellano, 2000; Meyer, 2008; Salmón 2012). However, while each Indigenous culture is unique, many Indigenous scholars agree that there is a unifying relational principle that connects Indigenous epistemologies on different but interrelated levels (Battiste, 2000; Castellano, 2000; V. Deloria, 2006; Wilson, 2008). Indigenous knowledge systems are lived and co-created on three different levels of relationships: between humans, between humans and the natural world, and between humans and spirit(s) (Battiste, 2000; Bell, 2013a; Kovach, 2009; Meyer, 2008; Salmón, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Relationality is the guiding and cohesive principle that connects these three levels of relationships and creates a cohesive worldview based on kinship: “I call this sphere of thought kincentricity” (Salmón, 2012, p. 21).

Relationality among People.

The first sphere in which the principle of relationality is enacted is among people. Indigenous epistemologies are held by communities and are transmitted orally within them (Bell, 2013a; Wilson, 2008). Within each Indigenous culture, the oral retelling of knowledge comes in

the form of teachings, myths, legends, stories, and personal experiences. This retelling creates a movement of expansion through the constant co-creation and re-creation of knowledge (Battiste, 2008; Bell, 2013a; Castellano, 2000; McIsaac, 2000; Salmón, 2012). Oral transmission updates knowledge, as each generation contributes its own situated perspective as embodied knowledge and passes it down to the next through intergenerational dialogue (Bell, 2013a; Castellano, 2000; Kovach, 2009; McIsaac, 2000; Tester & Irniq, 2008; Wilson, 2008;). An example of the traditional Indigenous teachings transmitted is *Anishinaabe Bimaandiziwin*, which encapsulates the understanding that “everything is related” and that “everything is alive” (Bell, 2013a, p. 94). This understanding is translated into the “seven original teachings”: Love, Honesty, Respect, Truth, Bravery, Wisdom, and Humility (Bell, 2013a, p. 94). Thus, a worldview is articulated as principles that are, in turn, lived in relationships with fellow humans: “these original teachings are the guiding principles for the way in which individuals are to treat each other” (Bell, 2013a, p. 94).

Among community members, Elders are the privileged sources of teachings and stories, not because they own them but because they carry them in their being as their connection with people, land, and spirit (Battiste, 2008; Bell, 2013a; V. Deloria, 2006). Elders have always transmitted this knowledge in the context of relationships and adjusted their teachings to the maturity of the learners (Castellano, 2000, p. 27). The title of Elder is foremost an honorary term; it is not attributed just due to old age but reflects the multi-faceted roles some people play in their communities (Iseke, 2010). In this sense, the English word “Elder” is reductive because it does not capture, as Indigenous languages do, the sacred and complex understanding of Elders as leaders, as teachers, as storytellers, as healers, and especially as ceremonial experts that can “conjure up Spirits” (Iseke, 2010, p. 84).

Moreover, oral transmission of knowledge is more than an exercise of memorization: “it is an entire way of being, and a communication with one’s universe” (Salmón, 2012, p. 76). In this way, for many Indigenous cultures, written texts are a flawed imitation of the oral word that negatively impacts the central oral relationship among people, with the land and with spirit, turning these into “silent and static symbols void of being-ness and vitality” (Salmón, 2012, p. 76). This also explains why many Elders still refuse to allow their words to be recorded, transcribed, and disseminated in the form of printed texts (Castellano, 2000).

Relationality with the Natural World.

The second layer of relationality in Indigenous epistemologies is between people and their ecosystem: “In Indigenous cultures, the landscape is more than simply a container for human history. It is the mind of reality shaping the stories of time and space” (Marker, 2018, p. 453). This relationship is intimate and long-standing, and it entails that people “are part of an extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origins. The kin, or relatives, include humans as well as all the natural elements of the ecosystem” (Salmón, 2012, p. 21). The relationship with the land is analogous to the relationship with a nurturing mother (Marker, 2018; Meyer, 2008). The mother cares for its children, and in return, they offer her thanks. Throughout the highlands of Peru, for example, “offerings of coca leaves and chicha are often made to Pachamama, the earth Mother, to give thanks for successful harvests” (D’Altroy, 2003, p. 324). Similarly, Hopi clan members in the American Southwest leave shrines at the edges of their fields to honour the elements of land and sky (Salmón, 2012). As mother, the land also provides the knowledge necessary to live off the land in a way that is sustainable (Salmón, 2012):

The Hopi collective memory became something that remained alive as long as Hopi Way of Life was preserved. Because the knowledge, and as a result the culture, is affected by

the landscape, *the land itself is perceived as the source of knowledge* [emphasis added].

This library of knowledge doesn't just remind people how to grow corn and beans in an arid landscape. It also reminds people how to behave. It teaches what is right and what is wrong and gives them the knowledge of what it takes to preserve this way of life. (p. 53)

Living off the land also requires careful observation and constant prolonged experimentation (Castellano, 2000; V. Deloria, 2006; Salmón, 2012). Indigenous empirical and practical knowledge, or Indigenous science, is embedded in the survival skills and technologies (agricultural and hunting) developed by Indigenous peoples over time (Battiste, 2000; Bell, 2013a; Castellano, 2000; Laugrand & Oosten, 2009; Salmón, 2012). This traditional ecological knowledge, which might seem essentially practical, is no less valued than nor separate from myth:

Over time and after years of observation, strategies were developed that ensure the annual harvest. The strategies became what might be called practical knowledge, which over time became sacred knowledge ... the best way to maintain this knowledge was through story, song and ritual. (Salmón, 2012, p. 53)

Traditional ecological knowledge rests on the understanding that all of life is interconnected and that relationships with wildlife are homologous to relationships among people; people must be respectful of game and plant life if these latter are to be plentiful (Berkes, 1999). Indigenous epistemologies also have moral connotations that dictate "a practice of ethical relationships with non-humans" (Watson & Huntington, 2008, p. 257). In this way, "the land becomes a source of morals and values, which are rekindled each time a story is retold ..." (Salmón, 2012, p. 53). Hunting as a survival strategy, for example, is practiced with special reverence and respect (Watson & Huntington, 2008). For example, Inuit hunters used to offer a last gulp of water to the hunted seal so that its journey to the spirit world might be eased (Laugrand

& Oosten, 2009). Through emphasis on animal agency and consciousness, Indigenous epistemologies blur the static western human–nonhuman boundaries. These ethical relationships are also extended to plants. For the Raramuri of Northern Mexico, ethical principles guide relationship with wild plants: “Communication and exchange of local knowledge about edible wild plants are important for the maintenance of the local philosophy and worldview in which humans and nature are interconnected, and the relations are guided by ethical and ecological principles” (LaRochelle & Berkes, 2003, p. 371). Additionally, ethical relationships to the land and to the animal and plant life are also central to Indigenous social cohesion, which depends on an awareness of a shared kinship with the larger ecosystem: “Hopi social cohesion is achieved through obligation to the clan. The clans are part of the Hopi moral landscape, which reflects their shared kinship to each other and to their human and nonhuman community.” (Salmón, 2012, p. 53).

Lastly, land as mother, teacher, and nurturer includes an important “geomythic dimension of landscape” (Salmón, 2012, p. 23). The “geomythic” dimension of land refers to the central place of certain deserts, lakes, rivers, and mountains in origin myths and in the collective memory of a people and, therefore, are the focus of special care and ceremonies. The Māori Whanganui Iwi of New Zealand, for example, fought for and won legal rights of the Whanganui River because it is an important ancestor for Māori people (Marker, 2018). For the Raramuri, the Sierra Madre of Chihuahua exists as a complete geomythical place: “*Iwaga* (essence or soul) reflects the total geomythic interconnectedness and integration of all life in the Sierra Madre” (Salmón, 2012, p. 23). For the Wixárika of the western Sierra Madre, *Wirikuta* in the distant northern desert is the mythical birthplace of the sacred Peyote and is the focus of their yearly pilgrimage (Stewart, 1987, p. 31).

Relationality with Spirit(s).

Finally, the third layer of relationality is with spirit(s). Indigenous knowledge maintains that there is an invisible immanent spiritual essence or power all around us, permeating everything (Battiste, 2000; Bell, 2013a; V. Deloria, 2006; Salmón, 2012). Animals, plants, and other non-human beings like water and even thunder, as well as deceased ancestors, have a spiritual essence (Battiste, 2000; Bell, 2013a; Castellano, 2000; V. Deloria, 2006). From an Indigenous perspective, this means that “Spirituality is not separate but is an integral, infused part of the whole.” (Wilson, 2008, p. 89). The relationship with spirit(s) is, therefore, not really a separate level of relationality but the binding element that connects all relationships in a unified web: “The acknowledgment of everything in creation as having Spirit,” and therefore that it is sacred, “is manifested in ceremony when "all my relations" is spoken after prayers are said” (Bell, 2013a, p. 100).

The connection(s) with spirit(s) as a source of “intuitive or spiritual insights” also provides knowledge as to how one should lead one’s life (Castellano, 2000, p. 29). Indigenous knowledge is therefore also revealed knowledge. It appears or manifests itself in direct personal ways through different means like dreams, visions, inspirations, and signs (Battiste, 2000, 2008; Castellano, 2000; V. Deloria, 2006). For example, Vine Deloria (2006) explains that dreaming was “the initial and unexpected contact with the Grand Mysterious power” (p. 1). For him, the connection with spirit must have come prior to the development of ceremonies and rituals, like the vision quest. Therefore, contact with spirit(s) or metaphysical/supernatural communication is given form through rituals: they are the main activity that establishes and increases the connection and relationship with spirit(s) (V. Deloria, 2006; Wilson, 2008). In this sense, the Vision Quest, a personal ritual shared by many First Nations across Canada and the US, was a means for purposefully seeking out this relationship with spirit(s):

Deeper knowledge than what had been originally allotted to human beings was possible only if the spirits, through the mediation of other creatures, shared some of their knowledge with us. Thus, there came about a ritual in which humans set aside time from their routine lives and opened themselves up to the possibility of establishing relationships with spirits and other creatures. This ritual was the vision quest, a time and means for seeking communication from nonhuman sources. (V. Deloria, 2006, p.16–17)

Consequently, communal ceremonies and rituals are crucial to the transmission and preservation of Indigenous knowledge. Performances reaffirm the central role of relationships, including relationships with the natural world, with the spirits, and with other community members (Battiste, 2008; V. Deloria, 2006; Salmón, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Through ritual, in the form of dance or song, for example, Indigenous cultural knowledge is experienced directly, enabling a cognitive, emotional, and physical collective embodied experience of foundational myths (Cajete 2000; V. Deloria, 2006; Meyer, 2008). The Tewa Pueblo people of New Mexico, to this day, perform yellow corn dances each summer. These ritual dances re-enact Tewa Pueblo creation stories, reaffirm tribal membership and obligations, renew kinship ties, and celebrate the “life-giving relationship with Corn” (Cajete, 2000, p. 184).

Lastly, a word must be said about the relationship between Indigenous languages and Indigenous epistemologies. Knowledge is in constant flux and depends on the social and cultural flexibility of each Indigenous culture (Battiste, 2008). This knowledge is created and preserved through stories and daily dialogue but also through the very structures of the Indigenous languages that express it: “Algonkian languages preserve those relationships in multiple dialects with the language family that acknowledges the animate and the inanimate” (Battiste, 2008, p. 13). Furthermore, Indigenous languages are key to Indigenous identity and to communication with non-

human relatives: “Language expresses one’s spirituality and allows for communication with the Creator, medicines, plants, and the spirit world. Identity as an Indigenous person is confirmed when the spirits *hear you* speaking to them in your language” (White, 2015, p. 134–135). The inherent capacity of Indigenous languages to connect these different levels of relationships stems from their quality as “linguistic portals” (Salmón, 2012, p. 70). Especially when used in a ritual context, such as songs, Indigenous languages are what enable the direct experience of spirit. For example, the deer songs of the Yaqui in northern Mexico express notions of a space and time where everything is perfect and in full flower. In this cultural context, the song is not just a way to remember or imagine such a time and place but a means to get to it: “Songs take us back to where everything is perfect” (Salmón, 2012, p. 70). It is in this sense that songs can be described as linguistic portals between dimensions (Salmón, 2012).

Finally, Indigenous languages are reflections of culture through their use of terms to name the land, as “cultural and social meanings are encoded in the many terms for the land” (Salmón, 2012, p. 73). Indeed, when peoples name things and label places, connections are established that give those places “being-ness” within an Indigenous worldview. Therefore, “Native languages are reflections of the landscapes within which they developed, and the speakers of those languages use their languages as mediums through which they express their relationship to their places” (Salmón, 2012, p.76). When the deer song is sung to the Sonoran Desert by the Yaqui singer, for instance, it simultaneously reaffirms the geomythical quality of the desert and strengthens the singer’s connection to it: “when Felipe sings a deer song, he is voicing this living and mutually life-giving relationship. The song renews the life of the wilderness world each time they are composed and recited” (Salmón, 2012, p. 77).

In sum, Indigenous epistemologies privilege seeing and nourishing the interconnectedness of all things: “Perhaps the closest one can get to describing unity in Indigenous knowledge is that knowledge is the expression of the vibrant relationships between the people, their ecosystem and the other living beings and the spirits that share the lands” (Battiste, 2000, p. 42). These epistemologies are holistic and relational; they rest on the firm conviction that “Everything that breathes has a soul. Plants, animals, humans, stones, the land share the same breath” (Salmón, 2012, p. 23). They are lived and embodied in dialogue, in stories, and in ceremony, ritual, and traditional ecological knowledge. Finally, they are expressed and preserved through Indigenous languages, which connect all three level of relationships.

Colonization, Acculturation, and the Loss of Indigenous Epistemologies.

Unfortunately, due to aggressive colonization, epistemologies in many Indigenous contexts have been eroded or lost altogether (Battiste, 2008; V. Deloria, 2006; LaRochelle & Berkes, 2003; Stewart, 1987; Wilson, 2008). Through forceful dispossession and removal of Indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands, colonization greatly impacted place-based Indigenous epistemologies all over North America (Stewart, 1987). After the military territorial expropriation, aggressive educational policies further disrupted the transmission of Indigenous place-based knowledges. In the US, for example, Lt. Richard Henri Pratt, former director of the prisoners-of-war re-education camp for American Native warriors, played an important role in the implantation of the American Indian boarding school system as the architect of the Carlisle Indian School (1879–1918), which served as a model for all other residential schools across the US and Canada (Stewart, 1987):

Though the Indians who attended this school were no longer prisoners, the same philosophy, discipline, and motivation prevailed. It was Pratt’s idea to make Indians into “white men” as quickly as possible. He saw no virtue in preserving any of their own culture

– their languages, customs, styles of dress, and religions. The sooner they became civilized and forgot all about being Indian, the better. To some extent, he was successful. (p. 64)

In Canada, it was the Indian Act (1876) that created the residential school system (1896–1996). As in the US, this act was a tool designed to assimilate and acculturate Indigenous children, thereby severing intergenerational bonds in Indigenous communities. This created a long-lasting multi-generational historical trauma for Indigenous peoples in Canada (Archibald & Dewar, 2010; Battiste, 2013). The result has been a loss of spiritual practices, a diminishment of native languages, and an impoverishment of traditional cultural and ecological knowledge (Archibald & Dewar, 2010). Loss of languages has been especially detrimental to the preservation and renewal of Indigenous epistemologies: “Disappearing with those languages will be the unique and landscape specific traditional ecological knowledge, innovations, practices and paradigms” (Salmón, 2012, p. 72).

Years after residential schools have closed, education in most Indigenous communities still does not privilege experiential and spiritual Indigenous way of learning. Therefore, even when traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous epistemologies are presented in class, it is far too often in a disembodied theoretical way, contrary to the spirit of Indigenous epistemologies (Cristancho & Vining, 2009). Colonial acculturation and educational assimilation policies have undermined the rituals through which Indigenous epistemologies were enacted and co-created, thus further eroding the communal transmission of Indigenous epistemologies (Cristancho & Vining, 2009). Vine Deloria (2006) sums up this predicament well:

We know today that very few people have visions, and that those who do have encounters that pale in significance and power compared to the visions presented above. What can account for this absence of meaningful relationship with the spirits? It seems that in the

process of abandoning their old life and being forced to live in a more structured society, we have lost our connection with the higher powers. (p. 40)

Indigenous Epistemologies and western Epistemologies.

Indigenous epistemologies or “kincentric” worldviews have often been confronted with and compared to Eurocentric knowledge systems. In many ways, these two knowledge systems were diametrically opposed, as “one was bound for an uncharted destination in outer space, the physical, and the other was on a delicate path into inner space, metaphysical” (Ermine, 1999, p. 102). Their historical confrontation was very damaging for Indigenous knowledge systems and “the tribal crews, along with their knowledge and secrets came precariously close to aborting their inward missions” (Ermine, 1999, p. 102). Meanwhile, the western exploration of “outer space” has continued unabated and, in many ways, has eclipsed other ways of knowing as if “western voyages and discoveries were the only valid sources to knowing” (Ermine, 1999, p.102).

In this next section, I underline, first, the western epistemologies that best exemplify what Willie Ermine (1999) refers to as “outer space” knowledge approaches and which are considered the most different to Indigenous epistemologies. Second, I discuss those “allied” theories (Absolon, 2011) which share some common elements with Indigenous epistemologies, and finally those that seem the most similar (but are still not identical) to Indigenous epistemologies.

First, positivism can be most highly contrasted with Indigenous epistemologies. Positivism posits that there is an “objective” reality beyond us that exists “out there,” in the “outer space.” We are not able to fully grasp it because of our own “lack of absolutes” (Creswell, 2013, p. 33). A positivist framework has been qualified as “reductionist, logical, empirical, cause and effect oriented and deterministic based on a priori theories” (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). Positivism is also based on the assumption of “atomism,” which refers to “keeping everything separate from

ourselves” (Ermine, 1999, p. 103). This implies that western science has habitually fragmented and measured the outer world to understand its complexity in a “fragmentary self-world-view” (Ermine, 1999, p. 102). From this perspective, relationships are not important to the understanding of things. Positivism is also the basis of the scientific empirical method, which is “concerned with the systematic analysis that is testable, verifiable and objective without the distraction or impairment of subjectivity, ideology or emotion” (Madison, 2005, p. 7).

The main conflict of positivism with Indigenous epistemologies is that atomism greatly restricts the possibility of holism and of seeing the interconnectedness of all things. Furthermore, atomism clashes with Indigenous epistemologies, as “Those who seek knowledge on the physical plane, objectively, find their answers through the exploration of outer space, solely on a corporeal level,” while “those who seek to understand reality of existence ... by turning inward have a different, incorporeal knowledge paradigm” (Ermine, 1999, p. 103). For many scholars, it is this “fragmentary self-world-view” which has created the “moral and spiritual crisis” in the west (Purpel, 1989, as cited in Ermine, 1999, p. 103). This type of positivistic empirical research was harmful to Indigenous peoples because, in the name of “objectivity,” researchers did not recognize that “value-laden classifications, meanings and worldviews” were superimposed on Indigenous peoples (Madison, 2005, p. 8).

Second, Indigenous epistemologies do share some common elements with “allied” theories, such as constructivism and critical theory, to name only two. Constructivism posits that the nature of reality is changing and fluid (Wilson, 2008). Within a constructivist framework, a person’s reality is constructed through their interactions with other people and with their environment. In this framework, reality must be considered from the standpoint of social status, gender, social interactions, culture, language, and the physical constraints of the environment

(Constantino, 2008; Davis, 2004). Constructivism postulates that individuals construe a reality that is coherent with the social and historical context of their lives (Davis, 2004). Constructivism can be related to Indigenous epistemologies because they both see reality and knowledge as being subjective and resulting from people's lived experiences. Constructivism shares the notion that knowledge is contextual and embodied and that there are no absolutes but rather a multiplication of specific and unique standpoints. However, contrary to constructivism, Indigenous epistemologies also include revealed knowledge that has its source within the spiritual, more-than-human world.

Critical theory (including critical feminism, critical ethnography, and other critical research approaches) can be put in relation with Indigenous epistemologies, as it too holds that reality is subjective. Its focus is on how power, understood as “the dominance-seeking, forced-based sense of the word,” (B. Davis, 2004, p. 126) and identity shape reality: “Critical theory looks at, exposes, and questions hegemony – traditional power assumptions held about relationships, groups, communities, societies, and organizations” (C. S. Davis, 2008, p. 140). Critical theory seeks social change and is concerned with the empowerment of human beings so that they may transcend the constraints placed on them by race, gender, and class. Within this framework, the diverse voices and values of marginalized communities from across the world are validated to counterbalance dominant discourses (Creswell, 2013, p. 29).

Indigenous epistemologies and especially their applications in local research contexts are also concerned with social change. For example, Kaupapa Māori research is a “local theoretical positioning that addresses the question of power, resistance, struggle, and emancipation for Māori people within the historical, social, and political context of New Zealand” (Smith, 1999, p. 187). However, contrary to Indigenous epistemologies, critical theory places its sole focus on worldly

power dynamics, whereas within Indigenous epistemologies, the ultimate source of power is spiritual; it comes from the spirits of animals, plants, and deceased ancestors (V. Deloria, 2006).

Finally, Indigenous epistemologies can find parallels in complexity science and ecological epistemologies. Both complexity and ecological epistemologies assert the interconnectedness of life and look at everything, from cells to people to ecosystems, as an adaptive, complex learning system (Davis, 2004). Ecological philosophies and complexity diverge from each other in the sense that complexity is more concerned with the workings of things, using the rhetoric of modern science, while ecology is more oriented “to questions of meaning, ethical action, spiritual entanglement, and mindful participation” (Davis, 2004, p. 161).

Like Indigenous epistemologies, deep ecology affirms that all life forms are inherently valuable and that humans need to act ethically in their relationships with the natural world (Davis, 2004). Additionally, deep ecologists are seen as “radical” ecologists because they affirm that “humanity has the right to draw on planetary resources *only* to satisfy vital needs” (Davis, 2004, p. 156). Deep ecology takes a political position against modern global capitalism and supports small-scale production (Davis, 2004). The ethical and political position of deep ecology converges with Indigenous epistemologies such as traditional ecological knowledge.

Nonetheless, contrary to Indigenous epistemologies, most deep ecologists do not ascribe a spiritual quality to the more-than-human world (Davis, 2004). The spiritual understanding of the natural world within deep ecology is marginal, whereas it is central to Indigenous epistemologies. Spirituality can thus be considered the main element of divergence between ecological philosophies and Indigenous philosophies:

It is in relationships with the land, with the places where we lived for generations that we come to understand the meaning of “spiritual ecology.” We understand it through our

celebrations, the celebrations of our “old people” ... In a sense, this is the relationship that western ecology is so desperately trying to understand. (Cajete, 2000, p. 185)

Lastly, in recent years, there has been an effort to bring together western and Indigenous knowledge systems and bridge epistemic differences. This can be seen in the “Two-Eyed Seeing” epistemological approach (Bartlett et al., 2012; Forbes et al., 2020; Hall et al., 2015). This approach marks a change in direction, as it is no longer about proving who is right about the nature of reality but rather about learning to work together, each from their own point of view. Briefly, “Two-Eyed Seeing” (*Etuaptmumk* in Mi’kmaq) was first introduced by Mi’kmaq Elder Albert Marshall in 2004; it embraces “learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing, and to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all” (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 335). It represents an effort to harmonize both approaches and get them to work together in collaboration and in mutual recognition with the goal of “seeing better.” The main outcome of this approach is that it has increased the recognition of Indigenous knowledge systems as valid ways of knowing that can work side by side with mainstream science and add valuable insights, especially in the fields of health care and resource management (Forbes et al., 2020; Reid et al., 2021).

The Branches: Indigenous Methodologies

Indigenous methodologies follow the overarching epistemic principle of relationality and are designed to ensure the “relational accountability” of Indigenous research (Kovach, 2009, 2017; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). In practice, this means that Indigenous methodologies are grounded in the 4Rs: “Respectful representation, Reciprocal appropriation, and Rights and Responsibilities” (Chilisa, 2020, p. 22). Before discussing specific Indigenous data-gathering methods, I describe

how these principles for conducting Indigenous research are carried through three main interrelated strategies: collaborative research, researcher reflexivity, and reciprocity.

Indigenous Methodologies as Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR).

Indigenous methodologies are aligned with Indigenous values and worldviews; their goal is to empower Indigenous communities. This is done through a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach that, as a collaborative approach, balances power dynamics by involving community members in research as “full partners” (Castellano, 2004, p.108; Chilisa, 2020). For university researchers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, this implies listening and learning from community partners. CBPR equalizes power differences by sharing decision-making and by assuring mutual ownership of the research (Viswanathan et al., 2014). CBPR therefore implies constant negotiation and following local research approval mechanisms with traditional Indigenous authorities through consultations with “Elders advisory committees” (Battiste, 2000; Castellano, 2004) or “tribal councils” (Smith, 1999). This ensures that research is aligned with community priorities (Chilisa, 2020; Flicker et al., 2015; Iseke & Moore, 2011).

Elders play an essential role in these committees, providing “wisdom, knowledge and ceremonial guidance to assist with research processes that respect Indigenous worldviews” (Flicker et al., 2015, p. 1149). Indigenous advisory committees, or local advisory committees, are therefore an essential aspect of Indigenous methodologies as they represent the communities’ research interests and needs while respecting Indigenous ways of sharing knowledge (White, 2015). Undeniably, it is these committees’ involvement and the guidance they give to researchers that ensures that research is relevant, transferable, and applicable: “Not only does this local insight add to the rigor of the research process, but it also increases its efficiency of time and resource use” (Tobias & Richmond, 2013, p. 135).

Nonetheless, while collaborations often occur at the level of leadership, it is important to keep in mind that Indigenous communities are not homogenous; there are many voices to be heard apart from those of leaders. Indeed, sometimes community leaders do not represent the whole range or all the interests of a community (Tobias & Richmond, 2013). Therefore, within CBPR, defining “participation” and “collaboration” in any given project takes time. Collaborative partnerships therefore take more time than non-collaborative approaches (table 1 below). This time is needed to develop trusting relationships with communities.

Indeed, the foundation of CBPR is relationality. Building a trusting research partnership requires time. As Kovach (2017) observes, “Indigenous methodologies are relational. They take time. However, investing time in Indigenous communities to form relationships is always worth the effort” (p. 224). This time is also needed to collaboratively design a research project that reflects community values and priorities (Iseke & Moore, 2011; Kovack, 2009; Morris, 2016; Smith, 1999; Tobias & Richmond, 2013; Viswanathan et al., 2014; Wilson, 2008). Furthermore, Indigenous methodologies such as CBPR empower Indigenous communities by encouraging them to determine their own ethical codes of conduct for researchers (Castellano, 2004). Numerous Indigenous scholars have emphasized that each community has its own culturally relevant ethical principles and that these should be followed by researchers in any Indigenous research collaboration (Battiste, 2008; Castellano, 2004; Felt & Natcher, 2011; Ferrazzi et al., 2019; Healy & Tagak, 2014; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). To illustrate the above-stated principles, we can briefly cite two examples of Indigenous communities that have put in place mechanisms to ensure respectful collaborations.

First, in the Maritimes, the Mi’kmaq Grand council of Mi’kma’ki (Mi’kmaq Nation) assigned a Mi’kmaw Ethics Watch to oversee all research that involves Mi’kmaq people and

Mi'kmaq knowledge, “ensuring that researchers conduct research ethically and appropriately within Mi'kma'ki” (Battiste, 2008, p. 3). For Battiste (2008), good collaborations entail that researchers fulfill their responsibilities and become “allies” by “pressuring and ensuring that universities protect the collective interests in Indigenous knowledge” (p. 6).

The second example concerns Arctic research. Inuit people and their environment have been the focus of extensive and often invasive health, geographic, and resource management research over the years (Grimwood, et al., 2012). To limit this and protect their interests, Inuit people created a “National Inuit Committee in Ethics and Research” called *Inuit Nipingit* (Nickels & Knotsch, 2011). Furthermore, *Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami* (ITK) an Inuit-run organization at the national level, was also created with the mission to “help achieve strong partnerships to promote Inuit health and well-being through the sharing and collecting of knowledge” (Nickels & Knotsch, 2011, p. 58). Concretely, this means that all future Arctic research must be inclusive of Inuit values (Healy & Tagak, 2014). These examples illustrate how Indigenous methodologies such as CBPR emerge out of specific Indigenous contexts and histories and, by empowering communities to determine *how* research will be conducted, deeply reform research practices:

Research has thus become much more a matter of negotiation among equals than a more traditional hierarchical process that provides local people with little capacity to direct and participate, even when the research is of great consequence to themselves and their communities. (Felt & Natcher, 2011, p. 113)

Table 1 summarizes comprehensively the critical elements of CBPR and recapitulates the roles and responsibilities of community members, the benefits to the research of their participation, and the challenges this approach can pose.

Table 1

Summary of Components of Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) (Viswanathan et al., 2014, p. 15–16)

Research Element	CBPR Application	Community Benefits	Research Benefits	Research Challenges
Assembling a research team of collaborators with the potential for forming a research partnership	Identifying collaborators who are decision-makers and can move the research project forward	Resources can be used more efficiently	Increases the probability of completing the research project as intended	Time to identify the right collaborators and convince them that they play an important role in the research project
A structure for collaboration to guide decision-making	Consensus on ethics and operating principles for the research partnership to follow, including protection of study participants	The beginning of building trust and the likelihood that procedures governing the protection of study participants will be understood and acceptable	An opportunity to understand each collaborator's agenda, which may enhance recruitment and retention of study participants	An ongoing process throughout the life of research partnerships that requires skills in group facilitation, building consensus, and conflict accommodation
Defining the research question	Full participation of the community in identifying issues of greatest importance; focus on community strengths as well as problems	Problems addressed are highly relevant to the study participants and other community members	Increased investment in and commitment to the research process by participants	Time consuming; community may identify issues that differ from those identified by standard assessment procedures or for which funding is available
Grant proposal and funding	Community leaders/members involved as a part of the proposal-writing process	Proposal is more likely to address issues of concern in a manner acceptable to community residents	Funding likelihood increases if community participation results in tangible indicators of support for recruitment and retention efforts, such as writing letters of support and serving on steering committee or as fiscal agents or coinvestigators	Seeking input from the community may slow the process and complicate the proposal development effort when time constraints are often present
Research design	Researchers communicate the need for specific study design approaches and work with community to design more acceptable approaches, such as a delayed intervention for the control group	Participants feel that they are contributing to the advancement of knowledge, vs. that they are passive research "subjects," and that a genuine benefit will be gained by their community	Community is less resentful of research process and more likely to participate	Design may be more expensive and/or take longer to implement; possible threats to scientific rigor

Participant recruitment and retention	Community representatives guide researchers to the most effective way to reach the intended study participants and keep them involved in the study	Those who may benefit most from the research are identified and recruited in a dignified manner rather than made to feel like research subjects	Participant recruitment and retention are facilitated, which are among the major challenges in health research	Recruitment and retention approaches may be more complex, expensive, or time consuming
Formative data collection	Community members provide input on intervention design, barriers to recruitment and retention, etc. via focus groups, structured interviews, narratives, or other qualitative methods	Interventions and research approaches are likely to be more acceptable to participants and thus of greater benefit to them and the broader population	Service-based and community-based interventions are likely to be more effective than if they were designed without prior formative data collection	Findings may indicate needed changes to proposed study design, intervention, and timeline, which may delay progress
Measures, instrument design, and data collection	Community representatives involved in extensive cognitive response and pilot testing of measurement instruments before beginning formal research	Measurement instruments are less likely to be offensive or confusing to participants	Quality of data is likely to be superior in terms of reliability and validity	Time consuming; possible threats to scientific rigor
Intervention design and implementation	Community representatives involved with selecting the most appropriate intervention approach, given the cultural and social factors and strengths of the community	Participants feel the intervention is designed for their needs, offers benefits while avoiding insult, and provides resources for communities involved	Intervention design is more likely to be appropriate for the study population, thus increasing the likelihood of a positive study	Time consuming; hiring local staff; may be less efficient than using study staff hired for the project
Data analysis and interpretation	Community members involved in interpretation of the findings within the local social and cultural context	Community members who hear the results of the study are more likely to feel that the conclusions are accurate and sensitive	Researchers are less likely to be criticized for limited insight or cultural insensitivity.	Interpretations of data by non-scientists may differ from those of scientists, calling for thoughtful negotiation
Manuscript preparation and research translation	Community members are included as coauthors of the manuscripts, presentations, newspaper articles, etc., following previously agreed-upon guidelines	Pride in accomplishment, experience with scientific writing, and potential for career advancement; findings are more likely to reach the larger community and increase potential for implementing or sustaining recommendations	The manuscript is more likely to reflect an accurate picture of the community environment of the study	Time consuming; requires extra mutual learning and negotiation

Researcher Reflexivity.

The second aspect of accountable and relational research is researcher reflexivity. This means reflecting on positionality and asking:

Where do I stand with regard to the researched? Am I still the colonizer? Who are the researched? Are the researched still colonial subjects distinct from the colonizers because of their incapacities or are the researched active agents capable of generating solutions to their social challenges? (Chilisa, 2020, p. 276)

A reflexive stance toward research requires questioning the “taken-for-granted” ways of doing research in Indigenous contexts (Parker Webster & John, 2010, p. 176). Like other critical methodologies (e.g., critical ethnography and critical feminism), Indigenous methodologies seek to change the “power relations between the colonizer/theorizer/knowledge producer and Indigene/theorized/knowledge receiver” (Parker Webster & John, 2010, p. 178). Reflexivity is therefore essential to the process of changing power dynamics because it forces us to acknowledge these dynamics and then to find ways of countering them. Critical reflexivity restrains researchers and views research participants as *bona fide* co-researchers, allowing their input to be integrated into the research process (Burnette et al., 2014; Kovach, 2009; Viswanathan et al., 2014; Wilson, 2008). Reflexivity is also important because western knowledge is still seen in many academic milieux as having more authority; reflexivity ensures that researchers do not impose their ways of producing knowledge in Indigenous contexts. In sum, the constant process of self-evaluation and self-critique dismantles western ways of doing research and allows researchers, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to maintain a genuine partnership throughout the research process (Tobias & Richmond, 2013). The element of reflexivity is further discussed in the subchapter on researcher positionality.

Reciprocity.

The third element, reciprocity, ties into the above two strategies (Kovach, 2009; McGregor & Marker, 2018; Wilson, 2008). Reciprocity, or “giving back,” is compatible with Indigenous epistemologies through the element of ceremony. Reciprocity is not payment, nor is it a one-time token gift of tobacco. It is a “stance” that must be held throughout the research process (McGregor & Marker, 2018, p. 327). Reciprocity must occur from the very outset of the research, as part of the preparatory process, and continue until the end. This stance is what makes long-lasting research partnerships possible (Wilson, 2008). In Indigenous methodologies, reciprocity also means learning about and respecting cultural protocols of appropriate gift-giving (Iseke & Moore, 2011; Kovach, 2017; Tobias & Richmond, 2013; Wilson Danard & Restoule, 2010). Reciprocity also ensures that research is beneficial for a community.

In sum, Indigenous methodologies are “culturally safe” and “culturally relevant” (Smith, 1999, p. 185). They are specifically intended to be ethical and relational and to work actively toward the self-determination of Indigenous peoples (Wilson Danard & Restoule, 2010).

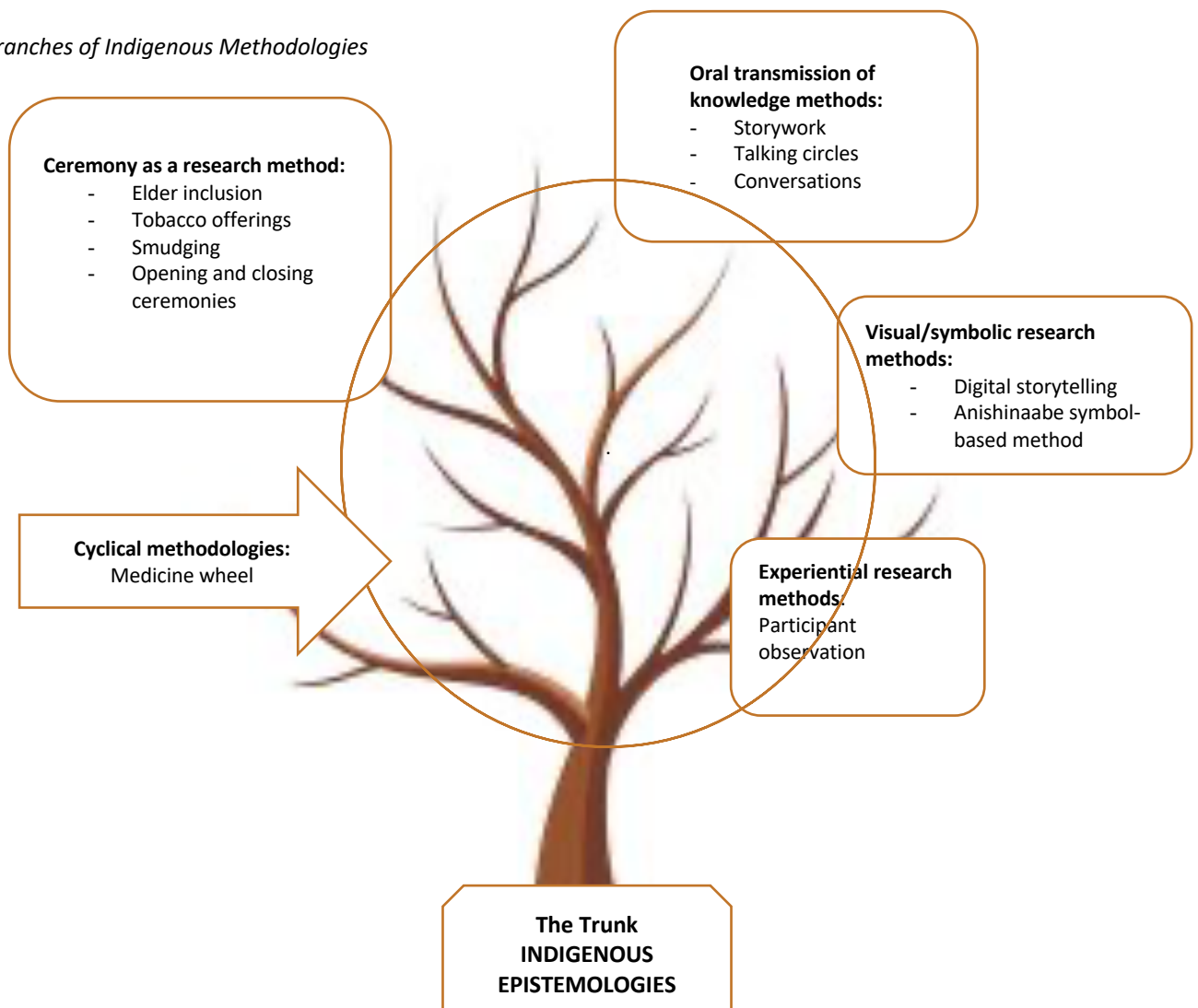
Data-Gathering Qualitative Indigenous Methods.

This review of the literature discusses only qualitative data-gathering Indigenous methodologies. According to Smith (1999), these started out as “a mix of existing methodological approaches and Indigenous practices” (p. 144). Ten years later, Kovach (2009) explains how they evolved into something more distinctly Indigenous: “there is a need for methodologies that are inherently and wholly Indigenous,” and “we are at a point where it is not only Indigenous knowledges that need our attention, but the processes by which Indigenous knowledges are generated” (p. 13).

Following the metaphor of the Tree of Indigenous research, the diagram below, figure 2, presents some of the main branches, or Indigenous methods, used by researchers. This list is not exhaustive, as Indigenous methodologies are creative and experimental. Every day, Indigenous researchers are creating new methods to gather knowledge in their own contexts.

Figure 2

The Branches of Indigenous Methodologies



Ceremony as a Research Method.

Ceremony is considered by many Indigenous scholars to be an intrinsic aspect of Indigenous research (Wilson, 2008; Wilson Danard & Restoule, 2010). Wilson's (2008) book *Research is Ceremony* draws an explicit connection between ceremony and research, as both

embody an Indigenous way of knowing and doing. Hence, Indigenous research, like ceremony, must take place in alignment with spirit and must have a deep impact on a person's psyche: "If research doesn't change you as a person, then you haven't done it right" (Wilson, 2008, p. 135). Furthermore, as an Indigenous researcher, Wilson (2008) explains that like ceremony, research demands rigorous preparation and commitment:

Indigenous research *is* ceremony and must be respected as such ... it is the process and the preparation that happens long before the event ... it is the knowing and respectful reinforcement that all things are related and connected. It is the voice of our ancestors that tell us when it is right and when it is not. Indigenous research *is* a life changing ceremony. (p. 60–61)

The methodology of ceremony honours Elders as the sources of Indigenous knowledge by making offerings to them. Ceremony also means giving Elders a place of honour in the research process by consulting with them and inviting them to conduct opening closing ceremonies and thanksgiving prayers. Wilson Danard and Restoule (2010) explain that offering tobacco to Elders creates a reciprocal relationship and allows learning and knowing to take place by creating a sacred connection between people, land, and spirit (p. 29). However, offering tobacco must not be taken lightly, and it must never be considered payment for information. It is, first and foremost, a sacred item in ceremony (Wilson Danard & Restoule, 2010):

In establishing this connection to the Creator, we realize that it is more than a tool or a method; it is a practice of faith continued from the beginning of Creation. It follows that in the use of tobacco there is a great deal of responsibility one must accept. (p. 32)

Additionally, when tobacco and sage smudging ceremonies mark the beginning of the research process, they also serve to keep the intention and purpose of research pure (Graveline,

2001; 2002). Ceremony in research therefore contributes, if done correctly, to restoring the original use of tobacco as an Indigenous sacred offering: “By reclaiming the traditional use and sacredness of tobacco, we begin to stop it from being misused and misunderstood.” (Wilson Danard & Restoule, 2010, p. 35). The main significance of using tobacco *as* a research method is that it is directly tied to Indigenous cosmology, thus re-establishing a non-verbal spiritual relationship among people. This goes beyond the research process and is hard to explain: “the relationship to the spiritual use tobacco as a research methodology is hard to translate” (Wilson Danard & Restoule, 2010, p. 33).

Finally, research methods that incorporate any kind of ceremony strengthen community. Just as the Tewa corn dances and the Hopi rain songs bring people together and remind them of their connection to the earth and its cycles, research that includes ceremonies is healing because it restores these primordial relationships: “To work in ways that strengthen and uplift the community is to do research, because this working towards greater self-determination requires knowledge and the building and internalizing of knowledge through relationships” (Wilson Danard & Restoule, 2010, 33).

Oral Research Methods.

Within Indigenous epistemologies, stories were seen by Elders as primary teaching tools because they shape people’s thinking. In the case of children and youth, stories foster independent thinking, enabling young people to assess situations and make decisions on their own (Bell, 2013b). Storytelling research methods are of special importance to the research process because they reflect Indigenous cultural values while simultaneously allowing a commentary on society, family life, and social relationships to emerge (Chilisa, 2020).

In Indigenous research, stories can have three main functions. First, they are tools of data-collection, analysis, and interpretation because they “allow the Other, formally colonized and historically oppressed, to frame and tell their past and present life from their perspective” (Chilisa, 2020, p. 194). Second, they allow research participants to speak freely about all their relationships, including spiritual ones. Third, stories and storytelling are tools for self-analysis, as they allow both the listeners and the tellers to gain a deeper understanding of each other (Chilisa, 2020, p. 194). Storytelling is also related to relational accountability because it is often accompanied by tobacco, the cultural symbol for thanking people, asking for help, praying, and sharing stories (Chilisa, 2020, p. 195).

“Indigenous storywork” was initially developed as a method of Indigenous education by Archibald (2008). In Indigenous research, it facilitates “meaning making through and with Indigenous stories” (Archibald & Parent, 2019, p.3). Storywork is guided by Indigenous knowledge principles such as “respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, holism, inter-relatedness and synergy” and is used for “working with people and their Indigenous knowledge of which stories are a core part” (Archibald & Parent, 2019, p. 3).

Talking circles are based on the ideal that participants respect and listen to each other and grow from that experience (Chilisa, 2020, p. 256–257). In talking circles, participants sit in a circle, which represents the holistic approach underlying all Indigenous methodologies (Wilson, 2008; Chilisa, 2020). Rather than formal interviews, which have often been criticized by Indigenous participants as intrusive, talking circles offer an informal conversation setting that allows a relationship to develop between the researcher and the participants as “co-learners” (Wilson, 2008, p. 113). The circle also reflects and symbolizes the equality of the participants and their relationships to each other and to the land: “group members sit in a circle that represents the holism

of Mother earth and the equality of all members” (Wilson, 2008, p. 11). A common practice in talking circles is the passing of a sacred object, a “talking stick,” or a feather. In this method, we also find the principles of respect and reverence embodied, as “these sacred objects symbolize collective construction of knowledge and the relations among group members” (Chilisa, 2020, p. 256).

Conversations can be part of talking circles or can be a separate approach. They are aligned with Indigenous worldviews because they prioritize orality and storytelling: “Indigenous scholars within and outside the Canadian context have referenced the use of story, through conversations, as a culturally organic means to gather knowledge” (Kovach, 2010, p. 42). One-on-one conversations can be distinguished from interviews in the sense that they allow for fluid discussion without the constraint of following a strict set of questions. Conversations are more dynamic and reciprocal than interviews, which are usually one-sided.

In *Research is Ceremony*, Wilson (2008) presents the result of his research not as a theoretical analysis but as a conversation. This demonstrates that from an Indigenous perspective, conversation is a form of Indigenous knowledge. The quotation below is an excerpt of his conversation with fellow Indigenous researchers on the role of conversation in Indigenous research:

Jane: Sometimes when you go into doing research, you don’t want to come with a set of questions. Especially to an Elder. So, you enter into conversation. And hopefully they will let you use a tape machine or allow you to take notes. And sometimes even those things are obtrusive and invasive, so you have to rely on your memory, and you have to rely on the things that are coming through you at the time, and the words that the Elder is saying.

And from there, extrapolate from what the Elder is saying. And that is conversation. That is a valid tool. Because it is contextual. It helps build relationships.

Me: Wombat talks about deeper and contextual relationships in her research. It is all about forming a relationship at a different level than we are accustomed to in our everyday lives. It is also about having an awareness of various levels of relationship that the other is engaged in. So, interviewing and questioning in Indigenous research cannot really take place without this deep level of listening that leads to meaningful exchanges. It's a matter of forming a relationship that goes beyond the informant researcher duality to becoming co-learners. (p. 113–114)

A word on “Indigenous autoethnography”: this method is analogous to Indigenous storytelling because it constructs identity explicitly in Indigenous terms. It is used more and more widely although researchers admit that “traditionally stories are shared orally, not the in written form” (St-Denis & Walsh, 2017, p. 52). This method has generally become a means through which Indigenous researchers rediscover their own voices as “culturally liberated human beings” (Whitinui, 2014, p. 456).

Visual Research Methods.

Indigenous cultures are rich in symbols and metaphors. Anishinaabe Symbol-Based Reflection is an Indigenous method that results from the adaptation of the visual research method photovoice (Chilisa, 2020, p. 284). In her research, Lavallee (2009) Indigenized this visual method and, instead of asking participants to take pictures as a way of expressing their experience, she invited Indigenous participants to create an Indigenous artifact or symbol. Practically speaking, this means they were given art supplies and five weeks to complete their personal symbol. Then, participants shared the meaning of their symbols in a talking circle. This method was created based

on the understanding that in Indigenous cultures, “symbols are considered sacred” and that making a symbol is a fruitful “spiritual process” (Lavallee, 2009, p. 30). Furthermore, this adaptation of an art-based methodology was done considering the importance of symbols in Indigenous cultures: “much of the essence of Native science is beyond literal descriptions and incorrect and misapplied words often destroy the real holistic experience” (Cajete, 2000, in Lavallee, 2009, p. 30). Lastly, visual and oral methods are often combined. For example, in the Anishinaabe Symbol-Based Reflection method, participants listen to the narratives about the symbols created. Storywork can also be combined with visual methods to facilitate the process of telling stories as “people grow into storytellers in the course of their lives” (Archibald & Parent, 2019, p. 8). For example, Parent tells of a project in which it was challenging to get students to tell their stories orally, so storywork was combined with photovoice so that they could tell their stories through images.

Additionally, digital storytelling is a narrative form of inquiry that requires the creating or retelling of stories in combination with audio content (music and sounds) and visual illustration (still images and video) (Freeman et al., 2020; Iseke & Moore, 2011). Digital storytelling is a research method that has been widely used to reconnect Indigenous people to their cultural heritage by preserving Indigenous knowledge in its oral form while adding new media (Cunsolo Wilcox et al., 2012).

Experiential Methodologies.

In Indigenous philosophical systems, experience is the foundation of learning. Experiential learning involves experimentation, exploration, and observation. This is considered a hands-on, experimental and experiential way of creating knowledge (Castellano, 2000; Bell, 2013a) and is the basis of all traditional ecological knowledge. In terms of Indigenous methods, gathering data and knowledge includes a form of participant–observation. Wilson (2008) explains this

methodology allows members of Indigenous communities to use their “insider” perspectives as researchers: “I have a natural advantage in that participant observation in Indigenous communities has taken place all my life. In that sense this research is *emic*” (p. 40). Furthermore, Wilson (2008) emphasizes that Indigenous research paradigms affirm that there is another way, different from prevailing western research paradigms, of creating knowledge and of relating to the world: “The notion that empirical evidence is sounder than cultural knowledge permeates western thought. For Indigenous scholars, empirical knowledge is still crucial, yet it is not their only way of knowing the world around them” (p. 59). For Kovach (2017), Indigenous methodologies must include this experiential and experimental dimension. Indeed, the researcher must be willing to be creative, to dive into uncharted territory and create their own approach grounded in their own understanding of Indigenous knowledge. In this way, the process of engaging with Indigenous epistemology must be more than intellectual; it must be embodied and heartfelt:

If you are looking to do Indigenous methodologies right, you will *not* find a prescribed method. If you want to do Indigenous methodologies right, uphold tribal knowledge, and honor Indigenous laws of love, respect, kindness, honesty, generosity, reciprocity, caring in your research. If you do this, you will be doing Indigenous methodologies right. (Kovach, 2017, p. 230)

Cyclical Methods.

Finally, Indigenous methodologies can also be cyclical, emphasizing the interconnectedness and interdependence of all things (Chilisa, 2020, p. 227–229). This is best represented by the “creation-centered” methodology (Chilisa, 2020; González, 2000). González (2000) uses the seasons and their rich symbolism to align ethnography with Indigenous worldviews: “The Four Seasons is my attempt to reformulate the task of ethnography, as it might

be viewed through the methodology of a circular ontology as experienced and often expressed by Native American ‘Indian’ cultures” (p. 627). This illustrates how western research methods can be Indigenized: “the methodological approach to ethnography that grew out of a cultural ontology of organic, circular order, one that I call ‘creation-centered’ significantly different from a received western, linear, mechanistic, and positivistic worldview” (González, 2000, p. 626).

Additionally, the seasons and their cyclical renewal are connected to Medicine Wheel research frameworks. The Medicine Wheel, reflecting the four directions, the four seasons, and the four ages of humanity, also illustrates the cyclical nature of human experience and how understanding this experience can be grounded in Indigenous knowledge (Chilisa, 2020, p. 228).

Researcher Positionality

Considering Situatedness in Indigenous Research.

In the Tree figure, positionality is mobile and is connected to researchers whose identities and positions are multiple. Cree scholar Kovach (2017) takes on the question of positionality in Indigenous research when she directly asks the question, “Who can apply an Indigenous methodological approach in their research?” This question is central and cannot be eluded because Indigenous research is so closely related to Indigenous epistemologies and to land-based cultures. Conducting Indigenous research necessarily “requires an exploration of identity” (p. 217). This investigation of identity, which is also an examination of one’s location, history, and memory, also requires looking at one’s relationship to Indigenous peoples and Indigenous knowledge systems:

The subsequent conversation then moves from matters of research approach to identity.

Here there are no definite answers, and there are many factors that move swiftly into the realm of the personal. Much depends upon one’s preparedness to go this route and the individual’s ability to be knowledgeable about, conversant in, and comfortable with

speaking to Indigenous knowledge systems and sharing their personal relationship to Indigenous thought. (Kovach, 2015, p. 57)

Moreover, the question of “who” can conduct Indigenous research is therefore related to a researcher’s *situatedness* within Indigenous thought and within Indigenous communities:

Indigenous methodologies require researcher credibility and more important trust. It is not simply trust in the findings and ‘validation of data’; it is about trust in *relationships*. This begs the question of who can *do* Indigenous methodologies? Certainly, it is more complicated than “if you’re Indigenous you can and if you’re not Indigenous you can’t.” I don’t want to discount lineage and identity, but to me it is about an ongoing mutual relationship with Indigenous peoples. Indigenous research is not an option for everyone or for every inquiry pertaining to Indigenous people. However, it must be available as a methodological choice for research and researchers that are well situated in its possibilities. (Kovach, 2017, p. 224)

“Situatedness,” a term coined by Haraway (1991), refers to the intersection of identity and knowledge production. Indeed, it asserts that “all forms of knowledge reflect the particular conditions in which they are produced, and at some level reflect the social identities and social locations of knowledge producers” (Rogers et al., 2013). This notion, developed within feminism, challenges the traditional assumptions that knowledge is “uninvested and supposedly neutral” and argues that, on the contrary, knowledge is always “partial and particular to context” (Griffin, 2017, Situated knowledge section). Therefore, situated knowledge assumes subjectivity and contextuality, for it is “at once historically contingent, deeply subjective, aware of its own meaning-making capabilities and potentialities, and committed to a faithful, no-nonsense (as Haraway puts it) account of the real world” (Buchanan, 2018, Situated knowledge section). A

situated perspective of knowledge, therefore, does not try to map out the world or “represent it as a machine”; situated knowledge rather conceives of the world as a “network of active connections” (Buchanan, 2018, Situated knowledge section). The concept of “situatedness” encapsulates the feminist critique of positivism and is analogous to the Indigenous critique of positivism.

Smith (1999) explains how Indigenous peoples were studied and defined by western colonial scientists from a so-called objective, neutral position. Nonetheless, this ‘objectivity’ hid the position of western scientific thought, which saw itself as the pinnacle of civilization and saw Indigenous peoples as primitive and their knowledge systems as primitive thought. According to Smith, Indigenous research is therefore characterized by the position of the colonized: “It is from the position of being the researched that Māori have resisted and challenged social science research. This challenge has confronted both methodological issues and epistemological concerns” (Smith, 1999. p. 174). Furthermore, the concept of situated knowledge as knowledge that is interconnected and multifaceted like a “network of active connections” (Buchanan, 2018, Situated knowledge section) is perfectly compatible with Indigenous knowledge, which is at once communal and personal, practical and metaphysical, embodied and spiritual, and based on the interconnectedness of all life (Battiste, 2008). However, situatedness is not an essentialist concept. On the contrary, one’s situatedness constantly evolves, expanding and contracting with knowledge and experiences. Therefore, just as men can be feminists, so too can non-Indigenous researchers be Indigenist and serve as valuable “Treaty partners” (Smith, 1999, p. 186). Positionality is thus multifaceted and requires agency. One’s position is the result of context and history, but it also results from action and intention. Therefore, a person can occupy multiple and often apparently contradicting locations, such as Settler and ally, that they must constantly negotiate.

Most importantly, all the elements that compose a person's position have an impact on their production of knowledge: "Haraway (1991) was the first to argue that knowledges are always situated, always produced by positioned actors working in/between all kinds of locations, working up/on/through all kinds of research relation(ship)s" (Mayhew, 2015, Situated knowledge section). To illustrate how positioned actors are needed to conduct Indigenous research, we can take the example of Kaupapa Māori research. Smith (1999) explains that this research is to be undertaken by someone positioned within Māori epistemology, not simply within Māori ethnic identity, and therefore who is "a Māori researcher, not a researcher who happens to be Māori" (p. 186). The distinction implies that a Māori researcher is someone willing to do research from a Māori *perspective*, which potentially includes non-Indigenous researchers. Therefore, the term "Māori researcher" refers to one who is situated within Māori culture, language, and worldview, as well as within the struggle for Māori self-determination (Smith, 1999, p. 187).

Finally, prior to conducting Indigenous research, it is crucial to look at how researchers, as knowledge producers, are situated to assess who or what their knowledge production will serve: "All these [locations] make a huge difference to what exactly gets done by whom, how, and where it's done, how it's turned into a finished product, for whom" (Mayhew, 2015, Situated knowledge section). For Kovach (2017) this means keeping in check the "White Gaze" that has pervaded research for so long (Kovach, 2017, p. 215). Consequently, it is necessary to scrutinize the situatedness of every researcher and assess what kind of knowledge about Indigenous peoples they are creating and whether it is aligned with an Indigenous perspective to confirm its validity (Smith, 1999):

It is also important to question that most fundamental belief of all, that individual researchers have an inherent right to knowledge and truth. We should not assume that they

have been trained well enough to pursue it rigorously, nor to recognize it when they have “discovered” it. An analysis of research into the lives of Māori people, from a Māori *perspective*, would seem to indicate that many researchers have not only not found “truth” or new knowledge; rather, they have missed the point entirely, and, in some cases drawn conclusions about Māori society that have only the most tenuous relationship to how Māori society operates. (p. 176)

Conclusion

The Tree metaphor that has structured this literature review has underlined how the elements of Indigenous research interact with each other and are interdependent. Indeed, it cannot be emphasized enough that the backbone and source of Indigenous research is Indigenous epistemology. It is from Indigenous epistemologies that the principles underlying Indigenous research flow, and it is in reference to Indigenous epistemologies that these principles make sense. Furthermore, as the literature review has shown, Indigenous methodologies cannot stand on their own, or they would be like branches severed from a tree; they can exist only as extensions of the trunk. The preceding discussion has prepared the reader for the analysis of current Indigenous research, which corresponds to the leaves of the Tree of Indigenous research. Therefore, although most of the principles and elements stated above are restated in the following section, when they are considered in the light of concrete projects, the understanding of them deepens.

Chapter Three: Mapping the Field of Indigenous Research: A Scoping Review

Introduction

The purpose of a scoping review is to chart the research conducted and examine “the extent, range and nature of the research activity” (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005, p. 21). Scoping reviews, unlike systematic reviews, allow for a broad review of research. This enables readers to get a sense of the state of research in an area, as well as the possible gaps and limitations that exist (Arksey & O’Malley, 2005). The present scoping review aimed to analyze multidisciplinary qualitative research that follows an Indigenous research agenda to decolonize, to transform, to mobilize, and to heal through research (Smith, 1999, p. 144–162). The purpose of this scoping review was to map the praxis of Indigenous research in Indigenous contexts in Canada over the last two decades, thus contributing to the growing body of literature that seeks to “ensure that Aboriginal research designs are not marginalized due to perceptions that they are somehow less valid and sophisticated than their [western] counterparts” (Saini, 2013, p. 8). In keeping with the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Rights terminology (UNDRIP, 2007), this review uses the term “Indigenous” to refer to the original inhabitants of Canada, and it uses the names of specific cultures and peoples when studies do so. When quoting sources, this review uses the term(s) used by the author(s).

Methodology

This scoping review used a mixed-methods scoping approach (western and Indigenous) based on Arksey & O’Malley’s (2005) methodological framework, with subsequent recommendations by Levac, Colquhoun, and O’Brien (2010), for the first five steps of the scoping process. It used an Indigenous conversational method (Kovach, 2010) for the final step.

The six steps of the scoping review process are as follows (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 23–29):

1) Identifying broad research questions with a clearly articulated scope of inquiry: this step includes justifying the limits of the scope of the review and acknowledging its potential limitations.

2) Identifying relevant studies based on research goals: this requires developing clear criteria for study selection with reasons for inclusion and exclusion, developing a list of search terms, and developing a list of databases to search.

3) Study selection: this is an iterative process that involves searching the literature, refining the research strategy, searching the literature again, and finally reviewing the articles according to study selection criteria.

4) Charting the data: this is also an iterative process that requires researchers to continually extract data and update the data-charting form. The charting form synthesizes the qualitative data by “sifting, charting and sorting material according to key issues and themes” (Arksey & O'Malley, 2009, p. 26).

5) Collating, summarizing, and reporting results: unlike systematic reviews, which often include only a small percentage of the studies reviewed in their final report, a scoping review presents a discussion of *all* the reviewed material. This step is further broken down into two sub-steps of analysis: a descriptive numerical summary analysis and a qualitative thematic analysis. A scoping review uses a narrative account to report its results based on the categorical themes that emerged during the review process. Finally, this step includes the discussion section, which considers the meaning of the findings as they relate to the overall study purpose and considers reviewer bias regarding data analysis.

6) The final stage of the scoping review process is an “expert consultation” exercise. It is considered optional by Arksey & O’Malley (2009) but essential by Levac et al. (2010). This stage is meant to broaden and deepen the discussion of results based on consultation with experts in the field. With clearly established study goals, experts in the field can provide further insights and confirm or nuance the initial findings of the scoping review. Arksey & O’Malley (2009) do not recommend a specific method for gathering the insights of experts in the field; therefore, I chose to use the Indigenous conversational method, as discussed by Kovack (2010). This method is discussed at length in the consultations section.

Guiding Research Questions

As outlined in the introduction, the three main elements of interest in this scoping review are 1) the use of Indigenous epistemologies as theoretical frameworks for research, 2) the use of Indigenous methodologies to gather data, and 3) the role of researcher positionality.

The following questions guide the analysis of the selected studies based on these main fields of interest:

1) What are the main Indigenous epistemological and theoretical frameworks found in the reviewed Indigenous research? Do these epistemologies constitute variations within a unified Indigenous epistemological paradigm?

2) What are the distinctive Indigenous methodological approaches presented in these studies? How do they set Indigenous research apart from other research approaches? What are their distinctive characteristics?

3) How do researchers position themselves? How do they justify their epistemological and methodological choices based on their positionality? What are some of the learning and training foundations presented in these studies that enable Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers to

conduct Indigenous research? What are some of the implications of researcher positionality that can be drawn from these studies? How does self-reflective researcher positionality serve to guarantee that Indigenous knowledge systems are not appropriated and distorted?

The discussion of results for each set of studies, grouped based according to their date of publication and field, is presented in three categories: epistemologies, methodologies, and researcher positionality. Finally, a conclusion for the ensemble of studies reviewed is presented, allowing for an appraisal of the evolution of Indigenous research over the last two decades.

Limitations

I want to acknowledge that this review of Indigenous research is limited in several ways. First, traditional Indigenous knowledge lies, in multiple forms, within Indigenous communities. Therefore, while some Indigenous communities have chosen to engage in research alongside Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, there are many that have chosen, for very valid reasons, not to do this type of work. Consequently, this review presents only the tip of the iceberg in terms of the vast creation of knowledge that is happening within Indigenous communities across Canada.

Second, methodologically speaking, this scoping review is limited because it was conducted by a single reviewer, whereas most scoping reviews are conducted by a team of researchers to diminish individual biases and potential errors. Additionally, the database search strategy may have inadvertently missed some valuable studies that used Indigenous language terms to describe specific methodologies and epistemologies. Moreover, due to time constraints, a subsequent bibliographical search of the studies was not done, once again potentially excluding some valuable studies.

Third, in terms of the analysis of the studies, the thematic categories created may give the impression that Indigenous research takes distinct forms based on the area or discipline of study.

This is not the case, and there are substantial overlaps in discipline based Indigenous research, so there might be repetition throughout the review. These categories were based on a thematic division of the studies reviewed and were used mainly to provide some form of organization for the body of literature.

Fourth, the consultation phase did not aim either to validate or contradict the evidence presented in the studies reviewed, as outlined by Arksey & O'Malley (2005). Its goal was to enrich the analysis of the studies included in the scoping review. Furthermore, although this scoping review uses a mixed-methods western and Indigenous approach, it does not claim to be an Indigenous research project per se. Rather, it is a methodological inquiry into the nature, scope, and evolution of Indigenous research with a significant contribution from Indigenous scholars. It is grounded in Arksey & O'Malley's (2005) western scoping methodology coupled with a thematic narrative analysis and discourse analysis. As Arksey & O'Malley (2005) do not suggest any specific way to conduct the consultation phase of the scoping review, it was up to me to decide how I would engage with Indigenous scholars. Given the topic of the scoping review, Kovach's (2010) relational Indigenous conversational method seemed the most appropriate way to engage with Indigenous scholars.

I also found that Redvers and Blondin's (2020) scoping review, "Traditional Indigenous Medicine in North America," used a mixed-methods approach (western and Indigenous), justifying this method based on the topic of the review and their invitation of an Elder to conduct the consultation phase. Redvers and Blondin (2020) explain how one could "move away from the conformity of western notions of deductive processes of new knowledge development and instead work towards providing space for the transnational voices within Indigenous communities and peoples" (p. 4). Inspired by their work, I set out to follow their advice: "we highly recommend

prioritizing the respectful engagement with Indigenous scholars and/or their scholarship, community members, knowledge holders, to ensure the concepts and resources presented will be grounded and relevant within any local cultural context” (p. 16).

Finally, my positionality as a non-Indigenous researcher trying to understand Indigenous research probably led, at times, to conclusions that were biased and narrow. Even with my prior experience with Indigenous peoples and communities in Mexico, I do not consider myself to be an expert. I want to state that the rich and meaningful dialogues I engaged in with Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers strengthened my practice of critical reflexivity: they pointed out to me my blind spots and assumptions and allowed me to see beyond the text and into the heart of Indigenous research, and for this I am very thankful.

Time Frame for the Indigenous Research Scoping Review: 1996 to 2020

Historically, 1996 signals a time of change in the Canadian political climate and in the relationship between the Canadian government and Indigenous peoples in Canada (as detailed in the literature review). This period can be divided into two sub-periods: 1997 to 2015 and 2016 to 2020. The year 2015 marks the completion of the TRC and the publication of its report and its “Calls to Action” (2015). The assumption was that there would be more Indigenous studies after the publication of this report. Therefore, these two periods were treated as distinct units of analysis.

Search Strategy

In collaboration with social sciences and education librarian (Patrick Labelle), a comprehensive strategy for searching Indigenous research studies was developed (Table 2). The social science librarian recommended electronic databases in which to search for Indigenous research studies and confirmed the choice of search terms for Indigenous populations (Table 3). The search terms for Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies, on the other hand, were drawn

from the books and article in the literature review and included all the relevant terms identifying Indigenous methodologies and epistemologies.

Art-based participatory research methods, which use visual and musical art forms (e.g., photovoice, theater, dance, and music) to creatively engage participants in research, were purposefully excluded from the search strategy because, although some scholars argue that they align well with Indigenous relational methodologies (Hammond et al., 2018), Indigenous scholars do not directly identify them *as* Indigenous methodologies (Chilisa, 2020). Art-based methods can be considered Indigenous methodologies only when they have been appropriately modified or Indigenized and are used with a corresponding Indigenous epistemology (Lavallee, 2009). For our purposes, digital storytelling was not considered an art-based research method but an emerging narrative method that preserves and promotes Indigenous oral knowledge and therefore qualifies as an Indigenous methodology (Cunsolo Willox et al., 2012). This list is not exhaustive, and some Indigenous terms might have been overlooked, but it does gather most of the main terms used to refer to Indigenous methodologies, epistemologies, and populations.

Table 2

String of Search Terms for Study Selection

Population studied	"Aborigin*" or "Indigenous" or "Native" or "Inuit*" or "Inuk*" or "Metis" or "First Nations" or "Native Canadian*" or "Native American*" or "American Indian*" or "tribe" or "tribal" or "Autochton*" or "Aboriginal*" not "Māori" not "New Zealand" not "Brazil" not "Australia" not "Alaska"
Indigenous epistemologies (key terms)	"TEK" or "Traditional ecological knowledge" or "Indigenous cultural knowledge" or "Indigenous thought" or "traditional knowledge" or "Indigenous ecological knowledge" or "Native American medicine wheel" or "relationality with land" or "relational ontology" or "indigenous theory" or "decoloniz* axiology" or "relational epistemology" or "herbal knowledge" or "Indigenous paradigm" or "oral knowledge" or "tribal critical theory" or "interconnectedness" or "critical indigenous pedagogy" or "elders" or "oral transmission" or "Indigenous myth*" or "Indigenous teaching*" or "Indigenous worldview*" or "intergenerational learn*" or "Indigenous creation stories"
Methodological & researcher positionality (key terms that correspond to)	"indigenous method*" or "decoloniz* research" or "decoloniz* action-research" or "storywork" or "storytelling" or "talking circles" or "yarning" or "dream journaling" or "dreaming" or "ceremony" or "Indigenous action research" or "healing participatory research" or "Indigenous qualitative research" or "collaborative research" or "Indigenous participatory research" or "community based participatory research" or "native American medicine wheel"

an Indigenous research paradigm)	or "medicine wheel" or "Indigenous relationality" or "reciprocity" or "culturally responsive indigenous method*" or "culturally sensitive method*" or "culturally relevant method*" or "methodological resistance" or "cyclical methodology" or "relational axiology" or "indigenous feminist methods" or "Four Rs" or "transformative research" or "healing method*" or "Indigenous conversation methods" or "Indigenous evaluation methods" or "Indigenous mixed methods" or "Indigenous multicultural validity" or "aborigin* guidance committee" or "tribal advisory council" or "Indigenous advisory committee" or "Inuit advisory committee" or "Indigenous youth participatory action research" or "Indigenous ethic*" or "culturally relevant protocols" or "self-reflexivity" or "critical self-reflexivity" or "researcher positionality" or "researcher situatedness" or "indigenous researcher*" or "non-indigenous researcher*"
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Table 3

List of Databases and Corresponding Number of Articles with Relevant Criteria Found (before Screening Process)

Ovid ERIC	54
Ebsco Bibliography of Native North; Americans Academic Search Complete; Education Source	90
Ovid Medline	65
Canadian Business and Current Affairs	75
Total studies identified through database searching prior to screening	279

Selection of Relevant Studies

The selection process included several rounds of screening. The inclusion criteria for qualifying studies were based on geographical criteria (Canada), temporal criteria (1997–2020), and the main characteristics of Indigenous research according to Indigenous scholars (Chilisa 2020; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). These principles are summarized below (Table 4) and are drawn from the “Tree of Indigenous Research” literature review section. The studies selected for the scoping review had to include at least three out of four of the main aspects of Indigenous research (“Roots,” “Trunk,” “Branches,” and “Researcher Positionality”; Table 4).

Table 4

Selection Criteria for Indigenous Research Studies

ROOTS: Historical and political context of Indigenous research	TRUNK: Indigenous epistemologies	BRANCHING OUT: Indigenous methodologies growing out of Indigenous epistemologies	RESEARCHER POSITIONALITY: Where do we stand on the Tree?
How does the research situate itself in	Reference to a specific <i>cultural context</i> (e.g., land,	Study discusses Indigenous methodologies and underlines	Does the researcher describe their

relationship to prior work done? Does the study refer to previous works by Indigenous scholars?	Indigenous population, or community). Importance of culturally specific worldview. Mention of <i>who</i> this knowledge belongs to (e.g., Elders).	principles of relational accountability, reciprocity, respect, and responsibility. Study discusses how it will be accountable to Indigenous community and outcomes for community.	relationship to indigenous peoples? Do they have background and training in Indigenous methodologies? What is the purpose of the research?
Does the study refer to prominent Indigenous scholars to explain its methodology (analysis of literature review)?	Reference to a specific environment/ecology – Importance of relationship with the land underlined. Reference to traditional ecological knowledge.	Collaboration: how was the community included in the study? How does research guarantee that community is a "full research partner"? Tribal advisory council: does the study include the input of an advisory committee of Elders that approve and give feedback on project?	Does the researcher practice critical-self reflexivity? Do they conduct location analysis?
Does the study reference a particular political or historical context that justifies this kind of research?	Reference to a specific Indigenous language. Reference to importance of orality in this tradition. Reference to how accurately these concepts are translated into English.	Ethics: does the study specify how it plans to respect specific cultural protocols/ethical principles in the process of conducting research?	Do they situate themselves within a web of relationships?
Is reference made to the disruptive impact of colonization/acculturation? (Need for research to include Indigenous voices.)	Importance of relationality in research and in cultural context is mentioned. Discussion of relationality among people, relationality among living beings (humans with animals and plants), relationality with spirits of ancestors, animals, and nature.	Reciprocity: how does the study propose to give back to the community, and is reciprocity conducted from a relational perspective? Does the practice of reciprocity in research acknowledge and include culturally specific ways of giving back (e.g., tobacco in certain cultures)?	Does the researcher situate themselves in relationship to a land, Territory, ecosystem, or ancestry?
Does the research underline the need for an Indigenist approach to research? Is the research is rooted in a specific place-based culture?	Sources of knowledge means by which we come to know. Elders' stories – importance of oral traditions, including myths and life stories. Mention of disruptive impact of colonization on	How are the methods used culturally relevant to the specific Indigenous culture being studied? How is the use of these methods justified?	How does the researcher situate themselves in relation to Indigenous epistemologies?

	traditional knowledge and on transmission of this knowledge to next generations.		
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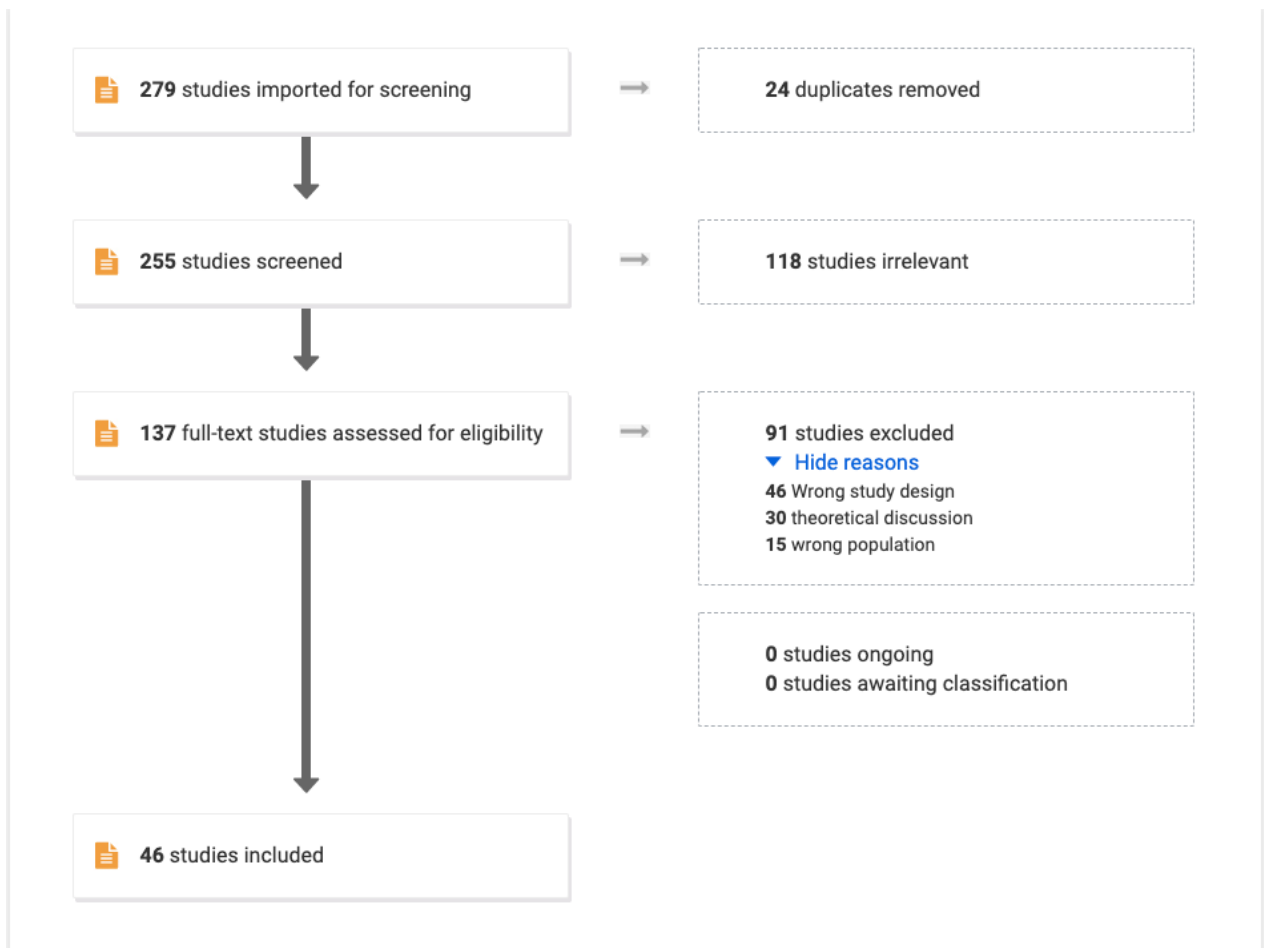
Exclusion criteria were “wrong population,” meaning research conducted on non-Canadian Indigenous populations, and “wrong methodology,” meaning studies that did not conduct research according to an Indigenous methodology and that did not follow an Indigenous epistemology or theoretical framework to conduct the research. Theoretical articles discussing the principles of Indigenous research or the possible benefits of doing Indigenous research but without presenting any concrete research were also considered to have a wrong methodology. This included systematic or scoping reviews, editorials, book introductions, book reviews, and literature reviews. Finally, studies that focused on educational or medical (treatment) programs comprising an “Indigenous cultural component” but that were not conducted according to an Indigenous research paradigm were again considered to follow a wrong methodology and were excluded.

Collating and Summarizing

The initial search yielded a total of 279 articles dated from 1997 to 2020. After 24 duplicates were removed, the 255 remaining studies were screened using their titles and abstracts. The title and abstract screening process allowed enabled a detailed examination of the Indigenous population participating in each study and the methodologies used. This step identified 118 articles as irrelevant and 137 studies as qualifying to move on to the next step of the review. The final selection of studies was based on a full-text review of each remaining article. This final stage yielded 46 articles that met all the identified inclusion criteria (PRISMA chart below, Figure 3).

Figure 3

PRISMA Chart



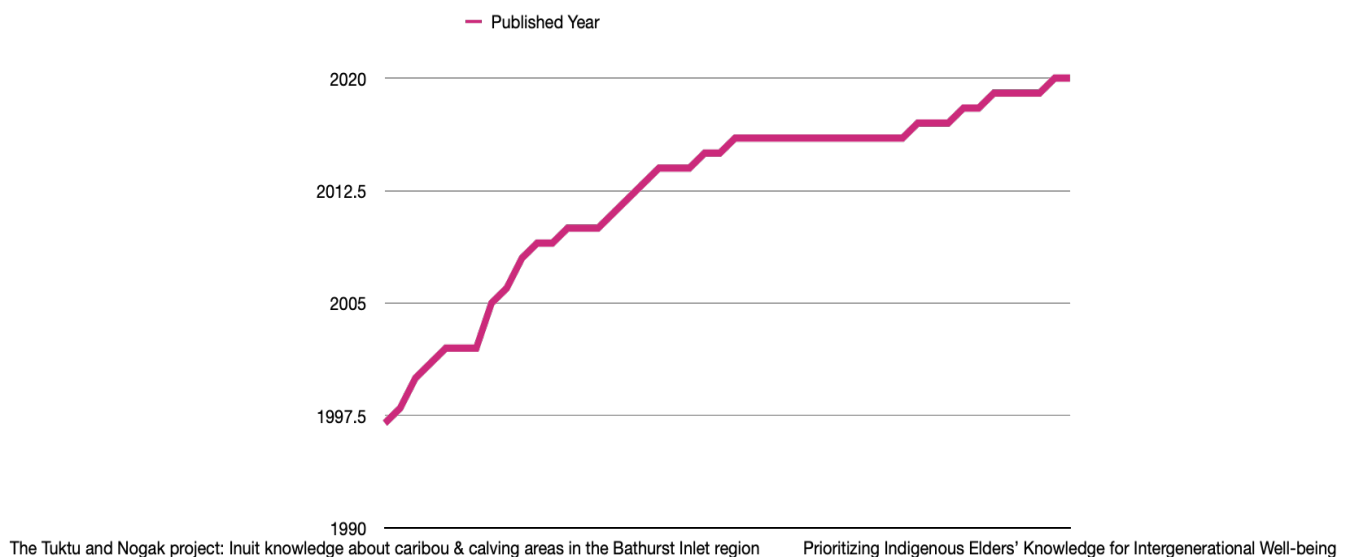
A key step in a scoping review is charting the data (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). A comprehensive overview of the author(s), year of publication, name of publication, Indigenous participants involved in the research, Indigenous methodologies and epistemologies used, and thematic alignment of the 46 articles is provided in Appendix D.

The studies were divided and subsequently charted in two sub-groups: studies conducted from 1997 to 2015 ($n=23$) and studies conducted from 2016 to 2020 ($n=23$). Studies conducted between 2016 and 2020 ($n=23$) proportionally outweigh those conducted between 1997 and 2015 ($n=23$) because, although they are equal in number, they cover a shorter span of time. This relative

surge in Indigenous research may correspond to an increased attention to and interest in Indigenous issues. The publication of the TRC's (2015) final report might also have translated into more funding for research projects aligned with its recommendations. Considering these historical factors, this scoping review first discusses and analyzes the results from the studies conducted between 1997 and 2015 and then those conducted between 2016 and 2020.

Figure 4

Increase in Numbers of Indigenous Research Studies (1997–2020)



Note. All the studies were entered in the graph, each represented by a dot. Then, a line was traced to illustrate the tendency of and apparent increase in Indigenous research over the chosen period.

Thematic Analysis

First, for each group of studies, 1997 to 2015 and 2016 to 2020, each area of research was identified as unit of analysis. Within each unit of analysis, a thematic analysis was conducted (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). A disciplinary subdivision of studies imposed itself because different disciplines or areas of research tend to work with different theoretical frameworks and methodologies. Research in education, for example, tends to be associated with a constructivist, phenomenological or critical theoretical framework and a qualitative methodology. On the other

hand, research in health (e.g., medicine, epidemiology, or psychiatry) and in natural resource management (e.g., marine biology or geography) tends to be associated primarily with a positivist outlook and with a quantitative methodology. Additionally, areas of research also tend to influence researcher positionality: we are more likely to find a critical and self-reflective stance in critical qualitative studies, such as those in education or anthropology, and a more objective neutral observer stance in quantitative scientific studies, such as those in health research (Madison, 2005). The analytical breakdown by research area also allows this scoping review to determine how each of these areas integrates the principles of Indigenous research differently and how this, in turn, might modify the dominant research approach of that discipline or area.

Qualitative thematic analysis was then used to help make sense of the data extracted from the studies selected (Levac et al., 2010). In this study, I used Braun and Clarke (2006) and Clarke and Braun's (2017) thematic analysis: "The aim of TA is not simply to summarize the data content, but to identify, and interpret, key, but not necessarily all, features of the data, guided by the research question" (p. 1). In this way, the research questions (found in section "Guiding Research Questions") on 1) methodologies used, 2) epistemologies used, and 3) researcher positionality guided the thematic analysis for this scoping review.

Therefore, each research area group (e.g., health or education) was analyzed separately, and a thematic breakdown was conducted within each group. Afterward, the thematic analyses of both groupings of studies (1997–2015 and 2016–2020) were compared to appraise the evolution of Indigenous research over time.

General Analysis of Results: 1997 to 2015

General Disciplinary and Geographical Overview

The disciplinary breakdown for this period (Table 5) shows that education ($n=11$) and health ($n=9$) are the most prominent areas of research that used an Indigenous paradigm, followed by natural resource management ($n=3$).

Table 5

Categorization of Research Topics (1997–2015)

Topics and subtopics researched	Number of articles ($n=23$)	References:
Education	11	
Post-secondary education	3	Graveline, F. J. (2001, 2002) Restoule (2005)
Indigenous & non-Indigenous teacher education	2	Kitchen et al. (2010) Kerr & Parent (2015)
Social work post-secondary education	2	Dumbrill & Green (2008) Clark et al. (2010)
Indigenous pedagogy/education & culturally relevant education	4	Sterling (2002) Alteo (2009) Bell (2013b) Lavoie et al., (2014)
Health:	9	
Traditional Indigenous healing practices	3	Edge and McCallum (2006) Iseke (2010, 2011)
Mental health wellness	4	Hanson & Hampton (2000) Lavallee & Poole (2009) Lavallee (2009) Pazderka et al. (2014)
Sexual health	1	Healey (2014)
Food security and wellness	1	Socha et al. (2012)
Resource management	3	Thorpe (1997, 1998) Latulippe (2015)

In terms of the geographical location of the research and the Indigenous communities involved, Table 6 shows the distribution of research studies per province and names the Indigenous groups that participated in those studies.

Table 6*Localization of Studies (1997–2015)*

Province/territory	Number of publications	Indigenous communities or participants
Alberta	3	Saddle Lake Cree
British Columbia	4	Coastal Salish First Nation, Nlakapamux
Manitoba	2	Métis
Nova Scotia	1	Mi'kmaq
Northwest Territories	3	Inuit
Nunavut	2	Inuit
Ontario	4	Off-reserve Anishinaabe (Peterborough), Mohawk, Oneida, Chippewa, Ojibwe, Anishinaabe, Cree, Métis (urban participants, Toronto Native Centre), off-reserve First Nations children (Peterborough)
Quebec	1	Innu
Saskatchewan	2	Pasqua Cree, Saulteaux First Nation, Nakota

General Methodological Overview

The methodological design aimed to foment relational accountability with Indigenous partners is community-based participatory research incorporating Elders in the research process in various capacities was the most important method used in these Indigenous research projects. This includes, but is not limited to, working with Elders as co-researchers, as advisors in committees that discuss ethics and appropriate cultural protocols, and as ceremonial specialists in conducting opening and closing ceremonies. This last element means that ceremony was also prevalent as a method in Indigenous research.

The most-used Indigenous methods to gather data were storytelling and storywork ($n=11$), which centre on personal life stories and the retelling of significant cultural narratives, and talking circles ($n=11$). The use of unstructured interviews ($n=5$), which is consistent with oral ways of sharing knowledge and with storytelling, was the next most common. Only one study used a modified arts-based visual research method: the Anishinaabe Symbol-Based reflection method (Lavallee, 2009).

An important aspect of an Indigenous research approach is the principle of reciprocity (Kovach, 2009; 2017), which holds that a research study should benefit the Indigenous participants involved. Therefore, the research methods used can also be linked to community outcomes as presented in table 7. Each of the reviewed studies stated the goals of using an Indigenous research methodology and how Indigenous populations would benefit from these studies. Some of the desired outcomes mentioned are intergenerational relationship building (Bell, 2013b; Thorpe, 1998), revitalization of traditional ways of learning and healing (Bell, 2013b; Iseke, 2010, 2011); knowledge creation in a distinctly Indigenous way (Lavallee, 2009; Sterling, 2002), capacity building for local researchers (Thorpe, 1997), positive identity formation for youth (Bell, 2013b; Thorpe, 1998), and the greater recognition of the validity of Indigenous knowledge (Latulippe, 2015).

Table 7

Distribution and Impacts of Indigenous Methodologies (1997–2015)

Research method protocols/ Stated impacts		Knowledge creation	Capacity building	Revitalization of traditional healing and teaching	Positive identity formation	Relationship building	Decolonizing	Greater consideration of Indigenous Knowledge as valid
Participatory action research	11	x	x				x	x
Elder involvement and guidance in research process	11	x	x	x		x	x	x
Ceremony, feasting	7	x		x		x		
Talking circles	11	x		x		x		
Storytelling/ Storywork	11	x		x	x	x	x	
Unstructured interviews	5	x	x	x				
Digital stories – audio and video recordings	1	x	x	x		x		x

Anishinaabe Symbol-Based Reflection	1	x		x	x	x	x	x
Culturally relevant programs	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Poetry/metaphoric narratives	3	x		x			x	

Area-Specific Analysis of Results: 1997 to 2015

The results section for studies conducted between 1997 and 2015 is organized thematically by key areas. The main areas presented are education ($n=11$), health ($n=9$), and environmental studies ($n=3$).

Indigenous Educational Research

Eleven studies were selected in the field of education (see Table 5). Of these, seven focused on decolonizing and transforming post-secondary education. These studies sought to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and ways of learning into university teaching and learning (Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Graveline, F. J. 2001, 2002; Restoule, 2005) to decolonize and disrupt dominant forms of education (Clark et al., 2010; Kerr & Parent, 2015; Kitchen et al., 2010). These seven studies are analyzed and discussed together because they share common elements in terms of their research goals, methods, settings, and participants. The remaining four educational studies are focused on articulating what constitutes an authentic Indigenous pedagogy or an “Indigenous learning ideology” (Alteo, 2009, p. 453) and how this can be implemented in schools (Bell, 2013b; Lavoie et al., 2014). These studies are focused mainly on the educational success of Indigenous youth and on demonstrating how this success depends on the incorporation of a storytelling pedagogy (Alteo, 2009; Bell, 2013b; Lavoie et al., 2014 Sterling, 2002) and on the presence of “cultural experts” in schools (Sterling, 2002, p. 4). These studies are also analyzed together because they share common goals and methods.

Indigenous Methodologies in Post-Secondary Education.

All these studies are centred on the “university classroom” as a microcosm of learning. They look at the way teachers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) are teaching, what they are teaching, and how students (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) are responding and reacting to that material. Five out of these seven studies were conducted within the university classroom itself (Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Graveline, 2001, 2002; Kerr & Parent, 2015; Kitchen et al., 2010).

In terms of methods, we find researchers as teachers, collecting data as they teach through autoethnography (Graveline 2001, 2002), through stories (Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Kerr & Parent, 2015; Restoule, 2005), through field observations (Kerr & Parent, 2015) and through talking circles with their students (Clark et al., 2010; Kitchen et al., 2010; Restoule, 2005). These studies describe their research as taking place within a Eurocentric learning and teaching context. Indigenous research in this context is conceptualized as a struggle because it is not easy to make space for Indigenous knowledge or the learning of traditions within the academy (Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Graveline, 2001, 2002). Consequently, the research methods employed in these studies intentionally sought to “disrupt the dynamics of western knowledge” (Kerr & Parent, 2015, p. 5) and “challenge and expand the commonly held notions of what constitutes academic research and discourse” (Graveline, 2001, p. 6). Autoethnography does just this by introducing a poetic and metaphoric Indigenous way of rendering research that corresponds to a distinctly Indigenous way of “re-storying” or representing research (Graveline 2001, p.7):

My heart beats

A painful Thud.

Inside the Cage of my Ribs.

A metaphor of my Confinement.

Smudge is a deeply significant

Teaching tool.

Who will understand

My Right/Responsibility/Desire

To enact a simple Smudge

To prepare my Self

My teaching

space?

Storytelling is also used as a research methodology to unsettle the dominant discourse and affirm Indigeneity: “we begin our disruption of Eurocentrism with a method familiar and critical to Aboriginal scholars, with a story that incorporates both the challenge and also the remedy” (Dumbrill & Green, 2008, p. 491). Story is crucial to Indigenous methodologies in education because it is a “method of teaching that invites listeners to find meaning through reflection and analysis of the narrative” (Dumbrill & Green, 2008, p. 491).

Lastly, three out of these seven studies used talking circles as their main method to gather students’ experiences of learning in a university classroom (Clark et al., 2010; Kitchen et al., 2010; Restoule, 2005). Talking circles (also called “sharing circles” or “healing circles”) have a storytelling component because they are about sharing lived stories and experiences (Restoule, 2005). Through this distinct method, Indigenous students are given a space and a voice to speak up: “I formed ‘learning’ circles in 2003 as a forum to discuss how urban Aboriginal men develop a cultural identity in a setting assumed to be the anathema to Indigenous cultures” (Restoule, 2005, p. 124).

Indigenous Methodologies in Culturally Relevant Education Studies.

Of the culturally relevant education studies, four used storytelling or storywork (Alteo, 2009; Bell, 2013b; Lavoie et al., 2014; Sterling, 2002) as their main method, and one used talking circles (Restoule, 2005). The purpose of this methodology was not to disrupt but rather to affirm Indigenous identity and worldview: “research may be seen as a search again for meaning from the stories people tell” (Clark et al., 2010, p. 300). This was done by focusing on the real-life stories of Elders, like Métis grandmothers (Sterling, 2002), as well as on cultural stories and myths, like the Umeek story told by Nuuchah-nulth Elders (Alteo, 2009). Stories are seen as the main doorway to understanding Indigenous “orientations and ideology,” which in turn serve to support the Indigenous learners, as they “would provide emancipatory insight for Aboriginal learning in contemporary settings” (Alteo, 2009, p. 454). The goal is therefore to Indigenize contemporary educational settings and support Indigenous students (Clark et al., 2010; Lavoie et al., 2014), and this requires the collaboration and direct input of Elders. This is mainly done in the form of storytelling – “the holistic vocabulary teaching approach originates in the stories of elders” (Lavoie et al., 2014, p. 219) – but also in the form of direct involvement in the process of creating culturally relevant education programs: “Elders were central to all points of research, from the ‘re’ search, as ethics guardians, project informants, data gathering, co-facilitators, wisdom and knowledge offerings as data, data analysis, and support for the research team itself” (Clark et al., 2010, p. 300).

Epistemological/Theoretical Commitments in Educational Research.

Methodology is deeply tied to epistemology in all these educational studies. Storywork or Indigenous storytelling methodologies (Archibald, 2008, in Kerr & Parent, 2015) are deeply intertwined with a decolonizing theoretical framework that seeks to change the curriculum (Lavoie

et al., 2014; Kerr & Parent, 2015). Story can also be related to Tribal Critical Race Theory (an adaptation of Critical Race Theory by Brayboy, 2005) and to the Medicine Wheel (Dumbrill & Green, 2008), story carries a philosophical concept that affirms the cyclical and circular nature of Indigenous epistemologies. This connection shows how cultural stories, storytelling methodologies, and Indigenous knowledge systems are deeply interwoven and together inform the critical assessment of education: “Tribal Critical Theory can inform understandings of Aboriginal education by elaborating and legitimizing theory based on Aboriginal experiences and contributing to social change by addressing problems faced in communities” (Kitchen, et al., 2010. p. 109).

Indigenous epistemologies also impact how the research is rendered. For instance, a poetic story-like format is related to Indigenous epistemologies: “we rely on Indigenous storywork to breathe life into our story, ... and to help us be taught by Raven” (Kerr & Parent, 2015, p. 5). The choice to represent classroom interactions with teacher candidates as stories about “encountering Raven” and interpreting Raven’s “cacophonous song” is a way of embodying an Indigenous worldview, as “stories are the most ancient Indigenous method of transmitting knowledge” (Dumbrill & Green, 2008; Kerr & Parent, 2015). Finally, whether it is directly stated or not, the use of Indigenous epistemological frameworks is also implied in authors’ engagement with Indigenous scholars as “teachers”: “We were significantly influenced by Indigenous scholars Dwayne Donald, George Sefa Dei, and Jo-Ann Archibald. We frame ourselves as being taught by these scholars and mentors instead of learning from them, to emphasize the gift of their teachings” (Kerr & Parent, 2015, p. 4).

Researcher Positionality in Educational Research.

Central to all methodological and epistemological choices is the positionality of the researcher. While some of the researchers of these studies do not explicitly address the question of

their positionality (Restoule, 2005), most do practice a self-reflexive stance. For the scholars who explicitly acknowledge their Indigenous background, this is followed by an affirmation of the purpose of their engagement and how this is connected to their research: “I am Anishinaabe of the Bear Clan from Kitigan Zibi First Nation. I am dedicated to the healing that needs to be done in Anishinaabe communities and I have dedicated my life to that task ... through the process of culture-based education” (Bell, 2013b, p. 36). Other examples of this are, “I write to engage, clarify, and support teachers, healers, and scholars who struggle to make room for Aboriginal realities in all contexts” (Graveline, 2001, p. 6), and “My Nisga’a name is Nox Ayaa Wilt, ... I have concentrated my teaching and scholarship efforts in Indigenous higher education in order to contribute to increasing the numbers of Indigenous youth with university degrees” (Kerr & Parent, 2015, p. 2).

These examples of positionality statements by Indigenous scholars underline that their research is not separate from their identities but is interrelated with the personal and collective struggle of Indigenous peoples, which is succinctly summarized in the Indigenous research agenda as “Healing, Decolonization, Transformation, Mobilization, Self-Determination” (Smith, 1999, p. 121). Indigenous scholars are therefore also activists: their research seeks to transform and decolonize education and can be framed as a social action or a “liberation praxis”: “We cannot keep waiting for our youth to reach post-secondary levels before they feel their identities valued, respected, and reinforced. It may motivate us to work for these changes ... completing the circle of decolonizing education” (Restoule, 2005, p. 130), and “we were reminded of the resistance transformation will face and also the work still needed to stop European ways being automatically considered the norm (in education)” (Dumbrill & Green, 2008, p. 502).

For non-Indigenous researchers, this self-reflexivity means recognizing their Settler positionality (Dumbrill & Green, 2008). This is part of the Indigenous research agenda because it participates in the struggle to decolonize education: “those from dominant locations must move aside so that those from marginalized groups can re-claim their identities and un-learn internalized oppression” (Dumbrill & Green, 2008, p. 495).

The work of non-Indigenous researchers is different both because it involves collaboration with Indigenous researchers and because it requires self-work to “un-learn oppression in order to modify their institutions so that they do not colonize” (Dumbrill & Green, 2008, p. 495). This reflexive stance requires humility and openness, ultimately leading such researchers to be considered allies and to contribute to the Indigenous research agenda: “I am fortunate to be taught by Indigenous scholars and community members about ways I can engage with Indigeneity as a Settler and the complications related to my identity as I work to create transformative opportunities in educational contexts” (Kerr & Parent, 2015, p. 4).

In sum, a self-reflective researcher positionality in educational research can help ensure that Indigenous knowledge is not wrongly manipulated or distorted. It can ensure that Indigenous knowledge is used in a conscious and respectful manner. This is the case when a researcher engages with the knowledge system of his own Indigenous culture: “as an educator, I hold many responsibilities to prepare to teach in a ‘good way’. This includes showing reverence for the wisdom I receive from my grandmothers, ancestors and the Creator who preceded me in this realm” (Kerr & Parent, 2015, p. 3). It is also the case when non-Indigenous scholars seek the guidance of Indigenous scholars (Kerr & Parent, 2015).

Indigenous Health Research

The second area of selected studies is in the field of health. This area of research can be further subdivided into, on the one hand, research that seeks to integrate Indigenous concepts of wellness and healing into western medical research on Indigenous health issues, such as mental health (Hanson & Hampton, 2000; Lavallee 2009; Lavallee & Poole, 2009; Pazderka et al., 2014), sexual health (Healey, 2014), and nutrition and food security (Socha et al., 2012), and on the other hand, research that aims to revitalize traditional Indigenous healing knowledge and practices (Edge & McCallum, 2006; Iseke, 2010, 2011). As in the case of education, these two subgroups are discussed separately because their research focuses are different.

Indigenous Methodologies in Health Research.

Mental health is a predominant area of Indigenous research because many Indigenous communities are still grappling with the traumatic legacy of Indian residential schools. The RCAP report (1998) made clear the extent of the damage suffered by Indigenous peoples because of residential schools and the ripple effects that this had on other areas, such as sexual health and addictions, and on the next generations (Hanson & Hampton, 2000). A health studies reviewed argue that the health issues encountered by Indigenous peoples in Canada are deeply tied to the questions of identity, colonial history, and politics, so research on such issues must go beyond western notions of health and recovery to include Indigenous notions of health and wellness (Hanson & Hampton, 2000; Lavallee, 2009; Lavallee & Poole, 2010).

All these health studies embrace a decolonizing research approach that leads, methodologically speaking, to conducting research in close partnership with Elders and community members. For instance, when looking at food security and community wellness (Socha et al., 2012), researchers first established a partnership with the Nishnawbe Aski Nation

(Indigenous organization representing more than 49 First Nations in Ontario) and created the Miichim Reference Group. This group guided the research design and determined the ethics protocol. Similarly, a sexual health study (Healy, 2014) was the result of community consultations in three Nunavut communities and was conducted in partnership with local Inuit wellness centres. An urban, off-reserve recovery and wellness study (Lavallee, 2009; Lavallee & Poole, 2010) was conducted in partnership with the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto.

All the studies used storytelling (life stories and cultural stories) and talking circles as their main data-gathering methods. For the sake of clarity, these are discussed separately, but in practice, they are often inseparable: “An Elder in a northern First Nations community opened the Talking Circle by saying: A long time ago the Creator was making Mother Earth” (Socha et al., 2012, p. 5). In each of the cultural contexts where these studies took place (Toronto, Nunavut, Saskatchewan), these Indigenous research methods were seen as culturally relevant and as validating Indigenous ways of knowing: “transmission of culture and history for First Nations peoples of the plains was by oral tradition through storytelling so the use of narratives or the telling of stories was appropriate” (Hanson & Hampton, 2000, p. 129). Talking circles are also called “sharing circles” in some cases because they create a safe place for sharing sensitive personal information. The use of such circles is described as a circle methodology, which is “a method that can be familiar and comforting for Indigenous research participants because the circle has a long tradition in Indigenous cultures” (Lavallee et Poole, 2010, p. 276). One interesting addition to the talking circle and storytelling methods is the Anishinaabe Symbol-based Reflection (Lavallee, 2009).

Epistemological Foundations for Health Research.

The epistemologies employed in these studies all privileged a holistic decolonizing approach to understanding health and therefore favoured Indigenous teachings about health. This is illustrated by the use of the Medicine Wheel, the Anishinaabe “Seven Generations Teaching” (Lavallee, 2009; Lavallee & Poole, 2010), the “Cree health teaching circle” (Pazderka et al., 2014.), and Inuit knowledge or *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit* (IQ) encapsulated in the principles of “*Piliriqatigiinni*q (the concept of working together for the common good); *Pittiarniq* (the concept of being good or kind); *Inuuqatigiinni*q (the concept of being respectful of others); *Unikkaaqatigiinni*q (the philosophy of storytelling and/or the power and meaning of story); and *Iqqaumaqatigiinni*q (the concept that ideas or thoughts may come into one)” (Healey, 2014, p. 3). Indigenous storytelling as a narrative framework was also used (Socha et al., 2012). Finally, Hanson & Hampton (2000) used a community psychology paradigm to explore the psychological and cultural strengths of First Nations residential school survivors. Although this may seem like a western paradigm, it was chosen because “it does not frame the participants’ experience in terms of western psychological concepts such as *coping* and *defense mechanism*,” but rather focuses on “competence, strength, and wellness rather than pathology” and therefore reflects First Nations concepts of healing and health (Hanson & Hampton, 2000, p. 128).

Researcher Positionality in Health Research.

Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers acknowledged in different ways the impact of their positionality on their epistemological and methodological choices. For example, Hanson (Hanson & Hampton, 2000) is a member of the Saulteaux First Nation and a residential school survivor. Hanson was the main interviewer in a study conducted with the participation of residential school survivors. Hampton, on the other hand, is a non-Indigenous researcher. In the

analysis, their perspectives “from inside and outside” were consciously combined to “compare narratives as constructed by participants from an indigenous frame of reference to western psychological theory and synthesize an interpretation of strengths into an indigenous psychological paradigm” (Hanson & Hampton, 2000, p. 131). The insider perspective or position was especially relevant in the application of their methodology, as most of the research participants confirmed that talking to a First Nations researcher/interviewer helped them feel more comfortable disclosing traumatic and sensitive information because they knew he could understand their experience from *within* (Hanson & Hampton, 2000). Similarly, Gwen Healy (2014) presents herself as a “local” researcher, and although she is not Inuit, she is “from Nunavut and familiar with community and territorial research protocols” as well as with Inuit ways of knowing. This position and her community-based methodology clearly enabled her to use IQ as her theoretical framework without any accusation of wrongly manipulating IQ.

Finally, Lynnn F. Lavallee explains that the use of an Indigenous theoretical framework was what was most “natural” to her considering that she is Algonquin Cree and French Métis (2009, p. 22). She describes her use of the Medicine Wheel and Anishinaabe teachings on health and wellness in her project as a way of providing an alternative approach to the prevalent positivist paradigm that usually guides research on the impact of physical activity on mental health. Indeed, the Medicine Wheel was a way of addressing not only the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of the Indigenous participants but, most importantly, their spiritual well-being. This was in line with Indigenous teachings about health and wellness but also with her own beliefs about wellness. The research, in turn, led her to deepen her own understanding of her Indigenous identity through health teachings: “For me, the research project became a tremendous learning journey that

included growing spiritually, exploring my identity as an Aboriginal person, and receiving an indescribable amount of knowledge from the community” (Lavallee, 2009, p. 26).

Indigenous Methodologies and Traditional Wellness Knowledge.

In the process of the recovery and revitalization of Indigenous healing traditions, traditional healers are crucial. Therefore, the focus point of the methodologies in the second group of health studies is Elders, leaders who often also play the role of healers in their communities (Edge & McCallum, 2006; Iseke, 2010, 2011). It is important to clarify what the title of “Elder” signifies in these studies. Elders are said to be the mentors of the younger generations, the gatherers of stories, and the carriers of histories, skills, and, most importantly, wisdom (Iseke, 2010). Consequently, methodologies for research into Indigenous healing knowledge are centred on creating trusting relationships with Elders: “the research methodology for working with Elders successfully must be based on respectful relations” (Iseke, 2010, p. 85). In this collaborative approach, Elders are included in every step of the research process, “as equitable partners in decision-making by consensus throughout the project in a manner that allowed for participants to guide and contribute to the development of the project activities and outcomes” (Edge & McCallum, 2006, p. 88). It is not surprising that Elders have privileged research approaches that use storytelling to gather data on traditional healing-based knowledge (Edge & McCallum, 2006; Iseke, 2010, 2011). In such approaches, talking circles are used to “examine stories, histories and pedagogies shared by Metis Elders in the storytelling sessions” (Iseke, 2010, p. 86). Additionally, the research process itself is conceived as a process of “story making” that involves multiple storytellers, “including the researchers who also tell the story of the research” (Iseke, 2010, p. 86).

Epistemological Foundation for Storytelling Research on Healing.

Unlike the previous group of research studies on health issues, which clearly indicated their theoretical frameworks (e.g., the Medicine Wheel), the epistemology for these studies can be best described as “respectful relations” (Iseke, 2010, p. 85; Iseke, 2011, p. 313). Upholding respectful relations can be deduced to be an Indigenous epistemology because of the importance such epistemologies place on relationality and interconnectedness (Battiste, 2000; Kovack, 2009; Wilson, 2008). The principle of interconnectedness is also emphasized when, for instance, Métis healing practices are framed from a holistic perspective that considers the historical context (experience of colonization and of assimilation policies), the ecological context (access to hunting and fishing ground and the relationship with land), and the spiritual context (influence of Christianity on healing practices) in which these practices evolved (Edge & McCallum, 2006, p. 93).

Finally, the emphasis on stories as a form of lived and embodied knowledge signals the use of an Indigenous epistemology. This form of knowledge is at once deeply personal and culturally and spiritually significant: “these are not made up but come from the spirits” (Iseke, 2010, p. 85). Indeed, gathering stories is not just the goal of these studies. This practice rather guides their relational epistemology, as it also involves accountability and reciprocity: “Being ready to hear the stories when the tellers are ready to tell them calls the researcher into a relationship of listener, and reflects the holistic process of both parties and asks the researcher to remember that deep respect is required in a story telling approach to research” (Iseke, 2010, p. 85).

Researcher Positionality and Traditional Wellness Knowledge.

All the researchers in these traditional health studies are Indigenous: Judy Iseke is French Métis, and Lois Edge and Tom McCallum are Cree Métis. Based on their reflective statements,

their research is intrinsically related to their Indigenous identities. In their cases, the research process therefore corresponds to an intimate process of continued identity formation during which the researcher deepens their knowledge about their own Indigenous culture and heritage: “I have spent many years ... learning about my own beliefs of spirituality and Indigenous traditions,” and “It was a huge undertaking to begin a research process with Elders. I have spent nearly ten years ... learning from Elders from many Indigenous nations. It has been a process of learning and discovery” (Iseke, 2010, p. 84, 95). It could be said that what most qualifies these researchers to conduct Indigenous research in traditional healing is precisely their thirst to learn more about themselves, to be in relationship with Elders, and ultimately to become gatekeepers of this ancestral knowledge themselves: “I consider myself a beginner in these practices and defer to the Elders as the experienced ones” (Iseke, 2010, p. 2010). One could argue that all research is deeply personal and that all researchers implicitly affirm who they are by their choice of research topics and theoretical frameworks. The difference then lies in the fact that Indigenous researchers’ choices and positions are part of a larger collective Indigenous project to decolonize and to “talk back” to colonial discourse, making this research a personal and political endeavor (Smith, 1999, p. 7).

What is striking about this Indigenous health research is that it is conducted as an integral part of the subject under study. The principle that Indigenous research is ceremony (Wilson, 2008) means that research requires the active and full participation of ceremonial experts. Elders “open” the research ceremony by making offerings (e.g., tobacco bundle), and the main component or heart of the ceremony is the storytelling (e.g., sharing circles, healing circles, and storytelling circles). Once the knowledge has been shared and transmitted to the younger generation, Elders conduct a closing of the ceremony that gives thanks to the Creator. This circular methodology is

specifically used to research healing practices due to the sacred and spiritual nature of the topic under study.

Indigenous researchers can be seen as the modern officiants for this new kind of ceremony, which ultimately seeks to create a space for Indigenous knowledge and make heard the voice of Elders in academic discourse. In this type of research, methodology is put to the service of the Indigenous communities, and the researcher engages in the research as a neophyte, through the process of which they are initiated into the sacred knowledge of their ancestors. It seems evident that there is a great reluctance in Indigenous communities to allow non-Indigenous researchers to study healing practices. There have been recent cases of opposition to anthropological research on such topics as sweat lodges, characterizing it as an intrusion and a desacralization of secret practices (Jérôme, 2008). Few are the non-Indigenous researchers who have spent enough time in Indigenous communities to become “adopted” by them and accepted into their innermost circles. This kind of symbolic adoption is rare, and it is not the researcher who can claim this position; rather, it is usually conferred to them by the traditional authorities of the community, who might give them an honorary symbolic kinship term such as “brother” or “son.” This term can signal that the individual, although not part of the Indigenous group by birth, has nonetheless earned their way into the heart of the group and become part of a larger extended family. For example, American anthropologist David Jones lived with Sanapia, a Comanche medicine woman, and she eventually adopted him as her “son.” He was taught to gather the medicines that none of her children or grandchildren were interested in learning about, and Jones got Sanapia’s permission to write them down in his book (Jones, 1974).

Indigenous Environmental/Ecological Research

Indigenous Methodologies in Natural Resource Management.

This final subcategory of the results for Indigenous research conducted between 1997 and 2015 consists of research projects centred on Indigenous ecological knowledge and resource management (Latulippe, 2015; Thorpe, 1997, 1998). For this review, two main projects were identified: the “Tuktu and Nogak Project” spanning from 1996 to 2001 (Thorpe, 1997, 1998) and the “Fish-WIKS Partnership Project” (Latulippe, 2015). Both these research projects used Indigenous research methodologies in tight partnership with local Indigenous communities, but in one case, the researchers are largely Indigenous (Thorpe, 1997, 1998, Thorpe et al., 2001), while in the other, they are mainly western (Latulippe, 2015).

In the case of the Tuktu and Nogak Project in Nunavut, an advisory board composed of Inuit Elders gave direction to the project and recommended the hiring of the Inuit researchers (Thorpe, 1997). This is a clear example of an “emic methodology,” one that evolves out of community direction and that “lacks the formal structure of typical of other studies” (Thorpe, 1997, p. 3). Furthermore, as a bottom-up research project, trust and respect were achieved through spending long periods in the communities where research would take place and through frequent visits with Elders and hunters.

In terms of the Indigenous research methods used in the field, Elders and community members decided that “the most appropriate forum in which to discuss Inuit knowledge about caribou would be expeditions on the land” (Thorpe, 1997, p. 3). This type of land-based method not only reflected local ways of generating and sharing knowledge, but it also generated immediate positive outcomes for local communities because the land-based expeditions became meaningful educational experiences for the Inuit youth involved in the project. Indeed, the main data-gathering

method for this project was “the Hiukitak school of caribou,” an Elder–youth camp in which Elders, Inuit youth, and researchers met in circle every morning to share stories, to talk about caribou, and to decide which skills to teach the youth on the land that day (Thorpe, 1998, p. 4). As an experiential methodology, the camp setting led Inuit knowledge keepers to “feel a strong sense of responsibility to communicate Inuit ecological knowledge for the survival of Inuit culture, tradition and subsistence” (Thorpe, 1998, p. 4). Other complementary data-gathering methods were informal conversations between youth and hunters while they hunted. Again, the contextual use of research methods allowed men to share relevant Inuit ecological knowledge about caribou, as well as their own hunting tips, with youth. This too had a direct community benefit, as youth participating in this project were initiated into traditional hunting: “pride and confidence burst from this youth as he came of age by skinning the caribou” (Thorpe, 1998, p. 5).

The Fish-WIKS research project was conducted in partnership with the Nipissing First Nation (Northeastern Ontario), the Assembly of First Nations, and the University of Toronto and the University of Guelph. As a collaborative project, it involved several Indigenous groups and ‘followed the lead’ of Indigenous organizations and communities. It sought to improve governance and include traditional knowledge within the environmental and natural resource regulatory framework. As an invited non-Indigenous researcher, Nicole Latulippe (geographer) considered carefully what methodology would be most appropriate to adopt considering the subject matter and her positionality. She asks, “To what extent can a non-Indigenous western trained researcher engage with an Indigenous Research paradigm and forge a cross-cultural or mixed-methodological approach?” (Latulippe, 2015, p. 7).

Latulippe (2015) opted for a mixed methodology, in the sense that it would include Indigenous and western research approaches, therefore combining both perspectives in a spirit of

respect and dialogue: “In my mixed methodology, the treaty relationship emerged as a powerful orienting device. For all treaty people, the nation-to-nation relationship offers an invitation to engage knowledge systems in a spirit of respect and reciprocity” (Latulippe, 2015, p. 1). In terms of the research methods used, Latulippe (unpublished doctoral dissertation, 2017) explains that she included “discourse and document analysis, literature review, experiential learning, open-ended interviews and stories” (p. 48); her overall a case study research design “aligns with the relational and contextual qualities of Indigenous research” (Latulippe, 2015, p. 49). In sum, her methodology was rooted in her understanding that “the foundation of Indigenous research is the lived Indigenous experience” (Latulippe, 2015, p. 5) and that she had to first and foremost consider her positionality as non-Indigenous researcher to be able to conduct her research.

Epistemological and Theoretical Frameworks in Ecological Research.

In terms of the epistemology used, the Tuktu and Nogak project allied Inuit ecological knowledge and scientific knowledge. From its outset, the project aimed to “assure a holistic approach to wildlife management” based on the expertise of Inuit consultants combined with scientific information (Thorpe, 1997, p. 3). In this way, the project sought to combine the ongoing scientific research of biologists on caribou migration and habitat with traditional Inuit ecological knowledge to come up with a “viable wildlife management framework for the North” (Thorpe, 1997, p. 3). This research also sought to document Inuit ecological knowledge about caribou and explore “the relationships between the spiritual, cultural, ecological, and biophysical aspects of the environment” (Thorpe, 1997, p. 1). In sum, this project based on an Inuit ecological perspective recognized the central relationship between caribou and Inuit people as part of the larger “reciprocal relationship with the land” (Thorpe, 1997, p. 1).

Similarly, the Fish-WIKS partnership project argued that the current national level of decision-making, based on western knowledge systems, has been inadequate for the effective governance of fisheries (Latulippe, 2015). The project sought to include Indigenous knowledge systems rooted in specific ecologies to ensure a more holistic and experiential approach to fish management. This would in turn benefit not only coastal Indigenous communities but also coastal non-Indigenous communities by providing sustainability to fisheries and finding alternative decision-making models (Latulippe, 2015).

The main difference between these two projects is that the researcher of the Fish-WIKS partnership project, Latulippe (2015), adopted a reflexive stance when choosing her theoretical framework. She first considered her position as a western researcher in a collaborative research project: “How can researchers working from a western methodological framework respectfully engage Indigenous communities in the field of traditional knowledge?” (Latulippe, 2015, p.1). In light of this question, Latulippe (2015) chose the “Two-Row Wampum belt” as her conceptual framework. The Wampum belt represents the treaty relationship, one that is based on a nation-to-nation relationship. The three rows of white beads in the belt signify peace, respect, and friendship (Latulippe, 2015, p. 8). The theoretical framework of this project sought to embody collaboration in the spirit of “respect and reciprocity” and practiced “relational accountability” (Latulippe, 2015, p. 8). Considering her social location as a Settler allowed Latulippe to employ “but not adopt” Anishinaabe ways of knowing and combine them with western critical theories, ultimately orienting her work “in both directions” (Latulippe 2015, p. 8).

In sum, resource management projects that seek to include Indigenous ecological knowledge in wildlife management and that arise in collaboration with local Indigenous communities must align their theoretical frameworks with those communities. Adopting a

conscious reflexive stance (Latulippe, 2015) makes the use of Indigenous knowledge systems more respectful. We can note an evolution in this regard when looking at these two examples of Indigenous research. Latulippe (2015) quoted amply Kovack (2009), Wilson (2008), and Smith (1999) and used their works to reflect on how to engage respectfully with Indigenous knowledge systems while Thorpe (1997,1998) did not have such resources to support her research and therefore does not explicitly adopt a self-reflexive stance.

Positionality in Indigenous Ecological Research.

This reflexivity regarding epistemology brings us to consider more carefully the different positionalities presented in these two research projects. In the Tuktu and Nogak Project, Natasha Thorpe was the principal researcher and the only non-Inuit researcher. The research team comprised Thorpe and three Inuit researchers (Eyegetok, Hakongak, and Kadlun-Jones), all working in close collaboration (Thorpe et al., 2001). As a research team, they provided training for the numerous Inuit interviewers, translators, transcribers, reviewers, and illustrators who worked to create the final product of the project: “The Tuktu and Nogak Project Final Report: A Caribou Chronicle” (Thorpe et al., 2001). Thorpe’s presence on the research team did not affect the choice to use an Inuit ecological knowledge framework for this research project because most members of the research team were Inuit. It was thus Thorpe who learned to adapt to Inuit ways of doing things and to the northern rhythm (Thorpe et al., 2001). The collaboration among the four women on the research team built trust and led to friendships. This allowed the researchers to take advantage of their cultural differences (Thorpe et al., 2001):

When Natasha was present, we found that Elders and hunters talked at a more basic level so she would clearly understand what they were explaining. This was an advantage because it means people took extra time to explain ideas and concepts more fully. (p. 179)

Natasha was also given the role of asking most of the questions because it was understood that she did not know much:

Another way to maximize on our different cultures occurred when Sandra and some of the other Inuit researchers were uncomfortable asking culturally specific questions to which they felt they *should* know the answers, as would all ‘good’ Inuit. When this happened, we could blame Natasha for wanting to know the answers so that Sandra and others would not lose respect. (p. 180)

Interestingly, Thorpe managed to blend into the group of Inuit researchers, and gender proved to be more of an issue, especially for the Inuit women researchers. As a team of women, they struggled to connect with Inuit male hunters and participate in male traditions surrounding the caribou hunt. In Inuit society, men and women traditionally have different roles, and in this case, they have different tasks associated with the caribou hunt: women butcher and prepare the meat after the men have hunted. Therefore, men and women have different perspectives on the caribou hunt, and “the ways in which they express their views depends on the *gender* of the person asking the questions” (Thorpe et al., 2001, p. 180). Positionality in Indigenous research is therefore not only a matter of being Indigenous or not but can also be related to things like gender. The Inuit women, as researchers, became seen as “outsiders” because their research called them to “work across clan, tribe, linguistic, age and gender boundaries” (Smith, 1999, p. 5). For Indigenous researchers, this is referred to as the “‘outsider within’ position of research” (Smith, 1999, p. 6). As research projects bring them to work in their own communities but in different capacities, they progressively leave their insider status and become “outsiders” through their association with western research projects and institutions (Smith, 1999).

Finally, as mentioned in the previous subsection, Latulippe's (2015) self-reflexive stance led her to consider whether she was indeed in a position to use an Indigenous research paradigm for this project. The recognition of the historical baggage of her position as a Settler made her consider that a cross-cultural framework would be more appropriate than an Indigenous framework. Using the guidance of Indigenous scholars (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008), Latulippe's (2015) theoretical framework answers the question, "What determines respectful engagement with Indigenous research?" (p. 8). Her goal was to bridge the epistemic differences arising out of distinct positionalities and conduct her research in respect and reciprocity using the Two Row Wampum belt: "Reflecting my social location, motivations, and teachers (Kovach, 2009), a treaty perspective encourages relational accountability, acknowledges difference, and bridges interpretive communities" (Latulippe, 2015, p. 7).

In terms of the learning or training foundations needed to engage in Indigenous research, Thorpe (1997,1998) does not discuss at all how she prepared for her field research in Nunavut or what led her to conduct research with these three Inuit communities. She does discuss learning on site and spending most of the five years during which the project took place in Nunavut. On the other hand, Latulippe (2015) explains in great depth what led her to this project and how a non-Indigenous researcher should prepare by holding a self-reflexive stance. She also sought to explore her relationship with the Nipissing and Anishinaabe lands, peoples, and histories, considering where she stood in relationship to those peoples, lands, and histories. It was through considering these relationships that the treaty perspective imposed itself:

The lands and peoples with whom I am connected in a myriad of complex ways are party to a number of historic, mutually agreed upon covenants between sovereign nations,

including the Robinson Huron Treaty, Treaty of Niagara, Great Peace of Montreal, and pre-contact treaties such as the Dish With One Spoon. (Latulippe, 2015, p. 8)

Therefore, although these treaties have been violated, “a treaty perspective offers rich grounds from which to ethically approach the place, people, and politics of my research site” (Latulippe, 2015, p. 7).

General Analysis of Results: 2016 to 2020

General Disciplinary and Geographical Overview

The general thematic breakdown for this period is as follows: health ($n=13$) and education ($n=5$) are the most prominent areas, followed by food studies ($n=3$) and social work ($n=2$), as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Categorization of Research Topics (2016–2020)

Topics and subtopics researched	Number of articles total=23	References
Health	13	
Traditional Indigenous healing practices	7	Howell et al. (2016) Tobias & Richmond, (2016) Sasakamoose et al. (2017) McGinnis et al. (2019) Smith et al. (2019) Leigh Drost (2019) Rowe et al. (2020)
Youth mental health wellness	1	Morris (2016)
Youth wellbeing	1	Petrucka et al. (2016)
Sexual health	2	Gesink et al. (2016) Maranzan et al. (2018)
Substance use disorder treatment	2	Marsh et al. (2016) Marsh et al. (2018)
Education	5	
Indigenous pedagogy Culturally relevant education	5	Deer (2016) Robinson et al. (2016) Stelmach et al. (2017) Twance (2019) Freeman et al. (2020)
Food	3	
		Martens et al. (2016) Bagelman et al. (2016)

		Delormier et al. (2017)
Social work Practice in Indigenous communities	2	St-Denis, Walsh (2016, 2017)

Table 9 below shows the distribution of the research studies per province and which Indigenous groups participated in those research studies.

Table 9

Localization of Research Topics (2016–2020)

Province/territory	Number of publications	Indigenous communities or participants
Alberta	5	Saddle Lake Cree, Urban Indigenous (Calgary)
British Columbia	5	Coastal Salish First Nations, Nak'azdli Whut'en First Nation, Urban Vancouver Indigenous peoples (Métis and First Nations)
Manitoba	1	Swampy Cree
Nova Scotia	1	Mi'kmaq
Nunavut	2	Inuit
Ontario	3	Cree, Ojibway, Metis (Northern Ontario), Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) and Potawatomi Nation, Biigtiging Nishnaabeg and Batchewana
Prince Edward Island	1	Mi'kmaq
Quebec	3	Mohawk, Mi'kmaq
Saskatchewan	2	Saulteaux, Cree, Dene, Dakota, Lakota and Nakota

General Methodological Overview of Results

The most used research design during this period was participatory action research or community-based research. In terms of the methods used to gather data, talking circles (this includes sharing circles and healing circles) were the most used method. Talking circles were often combined with storytelling. As mentioned for the preceding group of studies, it is often hard to distinguish between these two methods because the sharing circle is focused on stories. Feasting was used as part of the research process once, in the project “Feasting for change,” but this could also be considered a sharing circle because feasting was used to gather people around a table and share stories about traditional foods (Bagelman et al., 2016). Furthermore, autoethnography could be considered as a form of storytelling. St-Denis explicitly describes her autoethnography as a

retelling of the story of her awakening and reclaiming her Indigenous identity (St-Denis & Walsh, 2016). Some research projects used classical interviews, but more often, they used semi-structured interviews, as they relate more to the Indigenous conversational method of inquiry (Kovach, 2010). Only three projects used debriefing focus groups, and then only as a complementary method to discuss a specific aspect of participants' experience (e.g., after attending a cultural workshop). Only two projects included ethnographic field methods, such as observation and field notes, and in one case, it was specified that this was emic observation (in a classroom) and that the researcher was a member of the community (Deer, 2016). Finally, digital storytelling emerged as a relatively new methodology that is seen as a narrative form of inquiry (Freeman et al., 2020).

As mentioned in the preceding section, reciprocity is an important aspect of Indigenous research (Kovach, 2009, 2017). The methods that exemplify and embody reciprocity include ceremonies that incorporate tobacco offerings to Elders and community members. These were included in almost every project ($n=21$), as such ceremonies indicate that the philosophy of the 4Rs (Respect, Reciprocity, Responsibility, and Relevance) is implemented in an Indigenous research project. Specific research methods were linked to community outcomes, some of which are listed in Table 10 for the research projects from 2016 to 2020.

Table 10

Distribution and Impacts of Indigenous Methodologies (2016–2020)

Research methods and protocols: Stated impacts	Total : 23	Knowledge creation	Capacity building	Revitalization of traditional healing and teachings	Living documents (booklets, digital stories, and videos)	Positive identity formation	Relationship building	Restoring food security	Greater consideration of Indigenous Knowledge.
Participatory action research	21	x	x				x	x	x
Elder involvement and guidance in research process	21	x	x	x			x	X	x

Talking circles, health circles, sharing circles, And focus group circles	14	x		x			x	x	
Storytelling/Storywork	13	x		x	x	x	x	x	
Semi-structured interviews and conversational method	8	x		x					
Debriefing focus groups/circles	3						x		
Digital stories – audio and video recordings	1	x	x	x	x		x		x
Feasting	1	x		x			x	x	x
Auto-ethnography	2	x	x	x		x	x		x
Field notes and observations	2	x							

Area Specific Analysis of Results: 2016 to 2020

As for the previous period, the following results section is organized according to the most prominent areas of research. From 2016 to 2020, the main areas presented are 1) health ($n=13$), 2) education ($n=5$), 3) food ($n=3$), and 4) social work ($n=2$).

Indigenous Health Research

This area of research can be further divided into various subsections. The first concerns the studies ($n=8$) that sought to revitalize Indigenous knowledge and practices around healing and health by integrating this knowledge into health care and holistic wellness programs (Howell et al., 2016; Leigh Drost, 2019; McGinnis et al., 2019; Petrucka et al., 2016). This area of Indigenous research can also be referred to as the practice of “knowledge translation” (Tobias & Richmond, 2016) or the implementation of culturally relevant interventions in Indigenous communities.

The second group of health studies reviewed sought to use Indigenous concepts of wellness and healing to address specific health issues. Some of these issues are sexual health (Gesink et al.,

2016; Maranzan et al., 2018), substance abuse (Marsh et al., 2016; Marsh et al., 2018), and violence (Morris, 2016).

Indigenous Methodologies in Research on Traditional Indigenous Healing.

The Indigenous health research projects reviewed in this section were based on the principle of sharing power and knowledge with Indigenous communities. The research paradigms used were participant action research frameworks (Leigh Drost, 2019) and community-based research partnerships (McGinnis et al., 2019). Most of these health studies also emphasized reciprocity and responsibility in their research. These values are in turn linked to the Indigenous epistemological principles of relationality and interconnectedness encapsulated in the 4Rs: Respect, Reciprocity, Responsibility and Relevance. This means that reporting to the community as the research progressed and giving back to the community were central to their methodology (Howell et al. 2016). This reporting back to community was concretely implemented once again through advisory committees (Howell et al. 2016; Pretrucka et al., 2016; Tobias & Richmond, 2016) and through the balancing of power relations by hiring and training local research assistants, further contributing to local capacity building (Tobias & Richmond, 2016).

The methodologies used to collect data prioritized holistic research approaches to health that resonate with Indigenous participants. These include storytelling, talking circles, learning circles, workshops, and cultural camps (Pretrucka et al., 2016; Tobias & Richmond, 2016). Learning circles, for example, were used because they are “rooted in Aboriginal ways of learning and precipitating social change” (Pretrucka et al., 2016, p. 182). Storytelling and learning circles were further combined to create workshops. For instance, “Culture Camps” brought students and Elders together for a full day of storytelling. This methodology is also said to effectively engage youth in the research process. It was such a success that the Standing Buffalo elementary school

incorporated it into its curriculum (Pretrucka et al., 2016). Similarly, a two-day workshop on animal–human relationships was developed by McGinnis et al. (2019) to gather data on the process of humans reconnecting with their more-than-human relations. These workshops were complemented by researcher observations and follow-up focus groups (McGinnis et al., 2019). Another example of this kind of methodology is the “Elder Celebration Days” (Tobias & Richmond, 2016). These were created one year after the initial collection of data “as a full day of talking circles and ceremony where Elders got the chance to share their views about the research findings and strategies for implementing them” (Tobias & Richmond, 2016, p. 233). Talking circles are seen as “a culturally appropriate means for determining where consensus and convergence surrounding a particular topic exists within a group” (Tobias & Richmond, 2016, p. 233), and in this way, they were used to build on the findings of the initial research project.

Lastly, “health circles” were used. Like learning circles, these include sharing stories and talking, but they also involve an experiential aspect, such as a “medicine walk” on which participants learn to gather medicinal plants (Howell et al. 2016, p. 118). These are also called health circles because they are not just about sharing stories but because they “engage them [Aboriginal participants] in learning about Aboriginal health care practices, facilitate a healthier life context, work towards prevention of risk factors for health issues and validate and create a better understanding of the utility of traditional healing practices” (Howell et al. 2016, p. 116).

Epistemological Foundations of Research on Traditional Indigenous Healing.

In term of the epistemologies used, we find Indigenist frameworks rooted in “traditional Indigenous people’s philosophies and ways of being” (Rowe et al., 2020). These frameworks are also anti-colonial as they seek to acknowledge Indigenous people’s larger social realities within the context of colonization and intergenerational trauma (McGinnis et al., 2019). In this way, the

“Wise Practices” approach is “inclusive, locally relevant, sustainable, respectful, flexible, and pragmatic” because it considers all the “historical, societal, cultural, and environmental factors” (Pretrucka et al., 2016, p. 181). This type of study asserts that Indigenous health research should address “the needs and benefit the participants and their communities ... while reflecting Indigenous values and philosophies” (Pretrucka et al., 2016, p. 182).

These epistemologies are also part of “the larger worldview of connectedness to all our relations and its importance to physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health” (McGinnis et al., 2019, p. 165). These theoretical frameworks are also placed in opposition to biomedical dominant models of health: “Where the Aboriginal health model is holistic and encompasses the four dimensions of health (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being), the western biomedical concept of health often concentrates on disease and infirmity” (Howell et al. 2016, p. 114). “Indigenism” as an Indigenous research framework open to non-Indigenous allies is therefore also a form of epistemic resistance that “includes a focus that directly confronts and challenges colonial oppression and uphold Indigenous self-determination” (Rowe et al., 2020, p. 160).

We can also see in these studies that some frameworks lean strongly on specific Indigenous epistemologies. Researchers have ensured that they can work with knowledge keepers who can support the implementation of such epistemologies in their projects. For example, an Elder was given the responsibility of grounding a research project in a Musqueam worldview, which follows “the principle of coming together as one heart, one mind, by listening to the medicines and ancestors through the cultural teaching, through each other, and to *all our relations* would begin a return to being of good mind, good heart, good spirit, and good body” (Howell et al. 2016, p. 116). Relationality, therefore, is an epistemological principle that emphasizes the importance of

“Aboriginal knowledge, beliefs, values, and traditions as the guiding principles in the project” (Howell et al. 2016, p. 116).

Another option for Indigenous health research is to combine western and non-western epistemologies. In the project of “Putting knowledge into practice with Anishinaabe communities,” Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars opted for a hybrid research approach that “privileged both Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing and allowed researchers and community members to work together as partners” (Tobias & Richmond, 2016, p. 230). This mixed epistemology, called “Integrated knowledge translation,” is considered an epistemological method in itself within Indigenous health research, as it is seen to have the capacity to “act as an interface between two distinct ways of knowing that seem in opposition” (Tobias & Richmond, 2016, p. 231). The goal is to create new knowledge that “satisfies both approaches” (Tobias & Richmond, 2016, p. 231). Lastly, “Ethical Space” and “Cultural Safety” are two other models used in health research that recognize the need to create culturally specific and non-oppressive theoretical frameworks, as they “replace frameworks of universal cultural dominance” (Leigh Drost, 2019, p. 71).

Researcher Positionality in Research on Traditional Indigenous Healing.

Collaborations were the trademark of these Indigenous health research projects. For example, in the project using a “Wise practices” approach, the research team comprised Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners who had previously collaborated, over a long period of time, on another research project (Pretrucka et al., 2016). The success of the preceding research project led the research team of Elders, community members, and academics to repeat their collaboration. They had not only created good working relationships among themselves but, through their positionality, had established an “open linkage with the Standing Buffalo First Nation Chief and

Council” (Pretrucka et al., 2016, p. 186). This exemplifies how both researcher positionality and relationality determined the composition of the team members and Indigenous community partners. Indeed, the choice of the community in which to conduct research was based on “existing partnerships with many of the team members and the Standing Buffalo First Nation community” (Pretrucka et al., 2016, p. 182).

Furthermore, a consideration of what ethical relationality means in Settler–Indigenous relationships was important in these Indigenous health studies. Howell et al. (2016) sought to establish the “right relationship” during the research process (p. 119). This term reflects that a decolonizing process for Settler–Indigenous relations must be based on “respectful, reciprocal relationships that protect cultural knowledge and demonstrate our responsibility to follow local Indigenous protocols in our health leadership practices” (Howell et al. 2016, p. 116). Settler positionality was therefore acknowledged, and cultural consultants were included to support academic researchers and guide them through “the cultural nuances and protocols involved in implementing the program and establishing relationships with all involved” (Howell et al. 2016, p. 116). It is noteworthy that this was done not only to support “the resurgence of Indigenous leadership in health” but also to avoid the snare of “cultural appropriation aspects” (Howell et al. 2016, p. 116). This last point signals an awareness that there is indeed a risk of perpetrating cultural appropriation when conducting Indigenous research from a Settler positionality.

Another interesting example of a fruitful collaboration between an Indigenous and a non-Indigenous researcher is the team composed of Anishinaabe scholar Chantelle Richmond, from Biigtigong Nishnaabeg First Nation, and non-Indigenous graduate student Joshua Tobias. Notably, this team reversed the usual power relations that place the Indigenous researcher under the supervision of the non-Indigenous scholar (St-Denis & Walsh, 2016, 2019). In this case, it was the

opposite; the team used Dr. Richmond's "existing and familial ties within the community and region" to conduct the research on the preservation of Elders' knowledge about the relationship between health and traditional land (Tobias & Richmond, 2016, p. 230). Tobias and Richmond (2016) also sought to balance their power differences as university researchers and community members by living near the community during the primary data collection phase. The goal of this was to "introduce flexibility into the research" and to facilitate "relational accountability" and "mutual reciprocity" (Tobias & Richmond, 2016, p. 229).

Indigenous Health Research: Specific Health Issues

Indigenous Methodologies in Substance Use, Sexual Health, and Violence Research.

Most studies explored in this section used a "blended approach" combining Indigenous methodologies (healing practices and knowledge) with western treatments. The point of these studies was to determine whether integrating Indigenous traditional healing practices into western models would benefit Indigenous patients.

In the case of substance use disorders, the group treatment project, "Seeking Safety," used western medical practices blended with Indigenous healing practices. The research sought to examine whether this produced a suitable group treatment for Indigenous peoples (Marsh, et al., 2016; Marsh, et al., 2018). The methodologies used were based on the Two-Eyed Seeing approach, described as "The blending of Indigenous and western research methods, knowledge, translation, and program development" (Marsh et al., 2016, p. 4). Two-eyed Seeing is a "respectful research paradigm" that exemplifies an Indigenous decolonizing lens within contemporary research (Marsh et al., 2016, p. 4). Concretely, this methodology includes: 1) Elder consultations and collaborations, 2) an Aboriginal advisory group, and 3) the incorporation of traditional healing practices.

Consultation is especially important in health research because it is seen as consistent with a “decolonizing research approach” that honours cultural knowledge and knowledge keepers (Marsh et al., 2016, p. 4). Elders suggested using “sharing circles” with Indigenous facilitators as the main research method. Some of the facilitators were traditional Indigenous healers who had previous experience with Indigenous healing practices. Elders also recommended a gender division for the sharing circles so that participants would be more comfortable. As in the other health research projects, storytelling was incorporated in the sharing circles, but in this case, it was the facilitators rather than the participants who told stories and shared teachings, such as the “Seven Grand Father Teachings” (Marsh et al., 2016, p. 5). Elders were also present during the sharing circles and incorporated traditional protocols, such as smudging, drumming, singing, and making tobacco offerings.

The sweat lodge ceremony is an important Indigenous healing ceremony, and it was central to the blended healing program. Participants were invited to participate in sweat lodge ceremonies, and sharing circles were conducted afterward to allow participants to talk about the healing experience. The facilitators and the first author participated in all the sweat lodge ceremonies and provided support for participants (Marsh et al., 2018, p. 15). This can be seen as a form of experiential methodology, or a fieldwork type of methodology, because researchers and facilitators went through the same hour-and-a-half sweat lodge ceremony as the participants. This methodology reflects the fact that Indigenous healing is not just theoretical but experiential, and healing teachings are embodied in the sweat lodge ceremony. The western methodology used in this study was an end-of-session Seeking Safety questionnaire completed after each sharing circle. The questionnaire was designed to “capture immediate and specific reactions of participants to the

program” (Marsh et al., 2016, p. 6). Finally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants who completed the program and with the facilitators who supported it.

As for sexual health research, Gesink et al. (2016) and Maranzan et al. (2018) also followed Elders’ lead. For example, the Naadmaagewin Aboriginal Domestic Violence Committee (NADC) was created with Elders, Indigenous scholars, and community members to collaborate with a non-Indigenous university-based researcher (Maranzan et al., 2018). This committee had the role of reviewing and approving the project prior to its implementation. This committee also maintained control and ownership of the project material (including data and final reports). Another Indigenous cultural advisory group was created to guide in matters of “cultural sensitivity and respect, Indigenous ways of knowing, research methodology and collection and interpretation of data” (Maranzan et al., 2018, p. 143). In terms of methods, talking circles were used in combination with regular one-on-one interviews (Maranzan et al., 2018) or in-depth interviews (Gesink et al., 2016). Both projects prioritized a narrative approach that was considered consistent with health behaviour, health psychology and Indigenous ways of knowing.

Finally, the collaborative study on violence in Nunavut exemplifies community involvement. The project was presented as a study of violence among Inuit youth, but feedback from Inuit community members highlighted that Inuit already know a lot about violence. They did not want more research on that topic but rather to know more about the possible solutions. This feedback led to revamping the original methodology, which proposed that the main non-Inuit researcher would do in-depth interviews with Inuit youth. A new two- part methodology was created using 1) an online survey for Inuit youth to complete and 2) violence-prevention focus groups with Inuit youth, led by experienced Inuit facilitators. This new methodology created a culturally and emotionally safe place for participants to explore the topic of violence in all its forms

(Morris, 2016, p. 115). The focus groups were also designed by Inuit collaborators to be culturally relevant and include an Inuk elder lighting a *qulliq*, a traditional oil lamp. Lastly, the focus groups were complemented by a culturally appropriate educational segment for Inuit on violence prevention strategies (Morris, 2016, p. 116). Inuit youth participants later expressed that they had a great experience participating in the project and felt empowered and supported by the violence prevention strategies. This is what the main Inuit research partner, *Pauktuuit*, the Inuit Women of Canada association, sought in the first place.

Epistemological Foundations in Substance Use, Sexual Health, and Violence Research.

Hybrid methodologies imply hybrid epistemologies. The particularity of a blended approach is that it recognizes Indigenous knowledge as a “distinct and whole knowledge system that exists side by side with mainstream (western) science” (Marsh et al., 2016, p. 4). In the case of the substance use treatment project, Elders developed and adapted the framework of the Medicine Wheel to blend it with the Seeking Safety treatment model. In the case of the sexual health research project, the use of grounded theory was informed by the core principles of Cree Natural Law: “*wahkohtowin* means everything – flying beings, swimming beings, standing beings, still beings, four-legged beings, two-legged beings – is related” (Gesink et al., 2016, p. 13). The teachings of Cree Natural Law are also part of the Medicine Wheel, which “provides direction on how to live a healthy life” (Gesink et al., 2016, p. 14). This blended framework was applied to sexual health by emphasizing that sexual health is physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual and that restoring sexual health “requires a holistic life-course approach” (Gesink et al., 2016, p. 15). In this way, *wahkohtowin* guided how participants were informed of the project, how the conversations and interviews were formulated, how the data was analyzed, and how the results

were interpreted. The Medicine Wheel thus served as a guide in the talking circles and was used as a tool by Elders to discuss the difficult subject of sexual abuse (Maranzan et al., 2018).

In the case of the Inuit study on violence prevention, the guiding principles and the theoretical framework were grounded in the principles of Inuit knowledge or IQ. These principles can be summarized in the following teachings: 1) *Inuuqatigiitsiarniq*: respecting others, respecting relationships, and caring for people; 2) *Tunnganarniq*: fostering good spirit by being open, welcoming, and inclusive; 3) *Pijitsirniq*: serving and providing for family and/or community; 4) *Aajiiqatigiinni*: decision-making through discussion and consensus; 5) *Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq*: developing skills through practice, effort, and action; *Piliriqatigiinni/Ikajuqtiigiinni*: working together for a common cause – the end of violence in Inuit communities and the world; 7) *Qanuqtuurniq*: being innovative and resourceful; and 8) *Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq*: respecting and caring for the land, animals, and the environment (Morris, 2016, p. 111). These principles were the foundation of the study on violence and were respected during the focus groups.

Researcher Positionality in Substance Use, Sexual Health, and Violence Research.

The two studies on the efficacy of Indigenous practices in the treatment of substance use disorders were conducted by Indigenous authors who affirmed that it was their Indigenous position that allowed them to “appreciate the complexities and dynamics in health policy and research” from an Indigenous perspective (Marsh et al., 2018, p. 15). This indicates that, in their view, their life experiences and Indigenous background enabled them to grasp the need for holistic interventions and the inclusion of cultural safety models in Indigenous communities. They also advocated that research is the “key to making those strides and changes and elevating the health of a nation who has suffered due to the exclusion of these concepts in the past” (Marsh et al., 2018,

p. 15). In this context, emic research clearly served the agenda of self-determination of Indigenous peoples.

The sexual health research project was conducted by a mixed team made up of Cree scholars and non-Indigenous researchers. The Cree team members approached the research from their own positioning, defined as “a relational paradigm, meaning grounded in spirituality (involvement and connection to the spiritual realm) and reciprocity (honouring our relationships with other life)” (Gesink et al., 2016, p. 21). The non-Indigenous researchers approached the research in a pragmatic way, meaning that they took a participatory-based research approach that valued local knowledge and integrated it via knowledge experts (Gesink et al., 2016). The value of this collaboration lay in that the research team respected each other’s knowledge positions and therefore managed to integrate apparently disparate ideologies. This could be further analyzed through the symbolism of the Two-Row Wampum belt. The belt stands as a symbol of respect and ethical relationality, as it represents how each party travels side by side on their own canoe but does not attempt to interfere or get in the other’s canoe. The Wampum belt has also been called the “treaty relationship” and is seen to be a respectful basis for Settler–Indigenous relations in research (Latulippe, 2015).

Finally, Marika Morris (2016) describes herself as an experienced community-based non-Indigenous researcher. She had previous experience working with the Inuit Women of Canada association, Pauktuuit, on a number of projects. She signals that her personal relationships with some of the staff of Pauktuuit, developed over 25 years, were one of the principal elements that led her to conduct her research in partnership with Pauktuuit. Pre-existing relationships meant that trust with Inuit partners was already in place before the project started. Commenting on how central this relationality is to research, she invites researchers to find ways to make such connections early

on with Inuit partners: “For researchers who do not already have a pre-existing relationship of trust, we recommend that they find for their research team someone who can bridge that gap, or that they begin the process of reaching out to Inuit organizations and sharing research information that may interest them” (Morris, 2016, p. 116). The choice to use IQ as her theoretical framework was also the fruit of these long-standing relationships and was approved by Pauktuuit. The use of IQ in this context was not a case of cultural appropriation but rather a good example of a culturally relevant way of doing research stemming from the leadership of Inuit partners. Finally, a major aspect of the success of Morris’ research on violence was the large and active involvement of Inuit youth in the research design itself. Morris approached the Nunavut Sivunitsavut (NS) post-secondary culturally relevant Inuit program in Ottawa and submitted the research design for the students’ feedback. The Inuit students from NS named the project, shaped the research instruments, and formed an Inuit student advisory group: “Inuit youth shaped a project about Inuit youth” (Morris, 2016, p. 117). Her capacity to relinquish and share power and knowledge in this project led to Inuit involvement; therefore, she used her positionality as a non-Inuit researcher to serve the needs of Inuit youth.

Indigenous Educational Research

This area of research comprises of five studies. Four of these investigated the experiences of Indigenous students in mainstream education and advocated for more culturally relevant content and the greater participation of Elders. Three studies covered the various stages of education: early childhood (Deer, 2016), elementary (Freeman et al., 2020), and high school (Stelmach et al., 2017). The fourth and fifth study explored the concept of Indigenous land pedagogy (Twance, 2019), and physical education (Robinson et al., 2016) which could be relevant to all levels of education.

Indigenous Methodologies in Educational Research.

The studies briefly presented above sought to reinforce the role of Indigenous cultural knowledge in education by emphasizing the idea that “a culture-based education may be a key component for retrieving the connection once felt through knowing the true meaning of legends and stories” (Deer, 2016, p. 128). To achieve this, their methodologies were aligned with Indigenous oral knowledge. Deer’s (2016) study on the role of Mohawk cultural stories in early childhood education (ECE), for example, uses storytelling at the centre of its methodology. Deer (2016) recorded the storytelling of the Mohawk/Iroquois creation story, “Falling Sky Woman,” in three ECE classrooms (18-month-old to 4-year-old children) in the community of Kahnawà:ke, QC. The pedagogical process of storytelling was documented using field notes and participant observation. Then, Deer (2016) used semi-structured interviews with teachers and parents to explore more deeply the significance of telling these stories to the Mohawk children of Kahnawake. The aim was to underline the link between Indigenous ways of learning (storytelling) and cultural identity formation. This plural form of inquiry, grounded in a narrative and experiential approach, was also chosen because it “creates a relational dialogue” and a “mirror reciprocity” (Deer, 2016, p. 112).

Digital storytelling is another way to use storytelling as an effective Indigenous methodology in an educational context. The Nak’azdli Whut’en First Nation (BC), in collaboration with academic partners, sought to preserve the knowledge of Elders and encourage intergenerational dialogue through digital storytelling. This project created digital storytelling workshops that teamed upper elementary children with community Elders. This method was used to promote intergenerational relationships and to support students in learning interactively about

their culture and history. Attention was also paid to aligning the digital storytelling workshops with the BC curriculum.

The overall impacts of the digital storytelling workshops were later analyzed using two other qualitative methods: semi-structured focus groups or circles with the students and semi-structured interviews with the Elders and teachers. Some conclusions of this assessment were that digital storytelling is an appropriate “medium through which Elders can share their experiences for future generations,” and that for the elementary students, the “workshop was an excellent opportunity to reinforce and build on their foundational learnings” (Freeman et al., 2020, p. 292). Digital storytelling is therefore seen as a critical methodological tool in documenting and preserving Indigenous oral knowledge. Furthermore, it has been seen to have the power to reconnect generations separated by a cultural divide (language, digital era). The fact that children became co-learners and co-creators of oral knowledge fostered lasting relationships between them and the community Elders (Freeman et al., 2020).

Another method used to gather data was the conversational method. Robinson et al.’s (2016) study on the importance of culturally relevant physical education for Mi’kmaw students (elementary and high school) was done by gathering educational leaders and Elders in “educative conversations” to articulate what “Mi’kmaw-relevant physical education might look-like” (Robinson et al., 2016, p. 3). The conversations with Elders specifically followed the storywork methodology of Archibald (2009). As a decolonizing methodology, storywork also embraces a critical perspective: “Indigenous storywork – is both a narrative and critical research approach” (Robinson et al., 2016, p. 6). This method was chosen especially because it follows an activist agenda that works toward social justice, which was part of the goals of this research. These were 1) to give voice to participating Elders and community physical-education leaders and 2) to support

efforts of the community Elders and leaders to bring about change for their own communities (Robinson et al., 2016, p. 6). Conversations also allowed participants to discuss themes related to culturally relevant education as they naturally unfolded instead of in a controlled way following set interview questions (p. 6).

Similarly, Stelmach et al. (2017) explored the learning experience of Indigenous high school students using conversations and focus groups or circles. The focus groups or circles respected an Indigenous methodological approach, as they were conducted with “an open-ended conversational approach” (Stelmach et al., 2017, p. 6). Lastly, the testimonies of students were later analyzed through an Indigenous lens as “stories” (p. 8).

Finally, Twance (2019) explored the concept of Indigenous land pedagogy through her examination of Indigenous pictographs or *mazinaabikiniganan*. Indigenous “rock art” is found on multiple cliffs in Northern Ontario. The ancient, engraved symbols attest to the Indigenous occupation of these lands since time immemorial and to Indigenous people’s intimate relationship with the land. Instead of privileging an archeological research method to study rock art, Twance sought to dive deep into the collective memory of the people whose ancestors made these symbols through storytelling.

Twance underlines how pictographic research has historically been the domain of western anthropologists and archeologists, who have focused on “finding the original meaning behind these images and determining who made them, rather than understanding what kind of knowledge they embody for Indigenous peoples alive today” (Twance, 2019, p. 1320). Twance’s (2019) main objective was to reveal how a contemporary Indigenous perspective on *mazinaabikiniganan* is a “dynamic and relevant form of Indigenous knowledge” and how these ancient inscriptions might inform critical Indigenous land education (Twance, 2019, p. 1320). The research methods she used

sought to decolonize rock art research by centring on the oral stories of the Elders who live near these pictographs, while simultaneously being critical of the “Settler discourse” around Indigenous rock art (Twance, 2019, p. 1322). Her use of storywork and conversation affirms the relational and reflective aspect of Indigenous educational research. Additionally, these two methods work as one because stories were collected through conversations: “combining storywork with conversations allows research to become an active and engaging process between researcher and participants” (Twance, 2019, p. 1322). Finally, Twance (2019) underlined how her use of Indigenous storywork followed the 4Rs philosophy, known as “the foundational principles of respect, responsibility, reverence and reciprocity” (p. 1320).

Most of these educational studies relied on Elders to guide the research process. For instance, “the two Plains Cree Saulteaux First Nations Elders were offered tobacco and formally consulted for their guidance on the research project” (Stelmach et al., 2017, p. 6). In keeping with local Indigenous cultural protocols, all these studies used ceremony as part of the research process and offered tobacco to Elders “to acknowledge our relationship and to show respect for the stories that were being shared” (Twance, 2019, p. 1323). Finally, like Deer (2016), Twance (2019) used the ethnographic methods of observations and field notes each time she participated in community events and met with Elders. These latter methods complemented and contextualized her analysis of the recorded stories.

Epistemological Foundations for Educational Research.

In terms of the epistemologies used, all these studies followed theoretical frameworks that espouse a holistic and relational Indigenous worldview. However, some authors affirm this more explicitly than others. Deer (2016), for example, affirms that her study was based on “an Indigenous paradigm focused on the belief that all ‘knowledge is relational’ and ‘shared with all

of creation' (Wilson, 2008)" (p. 111). Indigenous stories were also not seen only as cultural content to be studied but as inherent to Indigenous knowledge systems. This applied equally to the project using digital storytelling. As an art-based study, it too was based on the underlying assumption that Indigenous stories are a valid form of knowledge.

On the other hand, Robinson et al. (2016) used the Medicine Wheel as their theoretical framework to conduct a culturally relevant physical education study. Framed as a "wheel as model approach," the Medicine Wheel suggested an "interconnected and relational model" used to promote a holistic approach to physical education (Robinson et al., 2016, p. 111).

Similarly, Twance (2019) refers to Anishinaabe knowledge as including both the physical and the spiritual. From this perspective, ancient rock inscriptions were not treated as mere material remains of past cultures but as integral parts of Anishinaabe people's lived knowledge and, especially, as evidence of their spiritual connection to the land (Twance, 2019). Twance (2019) and Robinson et al. (2016) also used a critical inquiry theoretical framework, which aims not just to revalorize and preserve Indigenous knowledge but also, and more importantly, to transform Indigenous education. Rethinking Indigenous education in this way "specifically prioritizes Indigenous theorizing, Indigenous Land rights, and Indigenous sovereignty" to make it culturally relevant and land based (Twance, 2019, p. 1321).

Lastly, Stelmach et al.'s (2017) research most clearly illustrates an Indigenous theoretical framework. They used and explicitly describe an "Indigenous framework theory" that emerged out of a "unifying Indigenous philosophy" based on "tenets such as balance, history, place, experience, process, practice, holism, and collectivity" (Stelmach et al., 2017, p. 5). An important part of this theoretical framework is researcher positionality. Reflecting on one's positionality is seen "as central to Indigenous theory" because this exercise leads to stating one's stance in relation to

Indigenous communities and knowledge systems. Researcher positionality is therefore linked to Indigenous epistemologies, as it “identifies self-situatedness and self-in-relation” (p. 5).

Researcher Positionality in Educational Research.

As Stelmach et al. (2017) stress, “self-situatedness” or positionality highlights “the cultural and community situatedness emphasizing it as change-oriented, flexible, transferable but not universal, critical and accessible” (p. 4). Furthermore, Stelmach et al. (2017) elaborate reflexively on their research team. Most noteworthy is the framing of this exercise as an important part of an Indigenous research methodology and an Indigenous theoretical framework (Stelmach et al., 2017):

In Indigenous research paradigms, not only does it matter *how* research is conducted, but it also matters *who* the researchers are in the doing of it. In an effort to ensure that this research was imbued with an Indigenous sensibility inclusive of Indigenous community knowledge (Smith, 2012), the composition of the research team was given due consideration. As mentioned, the majority representation on the research team were individuals of Aboriginal ancestry. Non-Aboriginal team members held experience either working with Aboriginal peoples or conducting research in Aboriginal contexts. The team was comprised of five Aboriginal and three non-Aboriginal members. (p. 5–6)

On the other hand, Twance (2019) conducted emic research, and her positionality reveals her intimate connection to the land where the inscriptions are located and to the people who made them:

I am an Anishinaabe woman from Pic Mobert First Nation within the Robinson-Superior Treaty Area. My home community lies midway between Lake Nipigon and Agawa Rock, both home to some of the most significant *mazinaabikiniganan* in Northwestern Ontario,

Canada. Growing up, I spent a lot of time travelling along the North shore of Lake Superior, giving little thought to my ancestors who may have travelled those same routes in the past. It was only after my first visit to Agawa Rock as an adult, one of the most visited and accessible *mazinaabikiniganan* sites in Ontario, that I realized the landscape we travelled was visibly marked with stories of my people. (p. 1320)

Naming and recognizing her ancestral connection with the landscape informed her study from beginning to end: “As an Anishinaabe researcher, I can offer an insider perspective on the significance of *mazinaabikiniganan* within our communities” (p.1321). Additionally, gathering stories about the Agawa Rock had collective value and benefited the community, but it also enriched Twance’s own personal journey as an Anishinaabe woman:

I first visited Agawa as a teenager with my mother and my sister. I had a different set of pre-understandings and pre-judgements then that made me view this place in a particular way. However, returning to this site as an adult with a more critical understanding of history, place, and identity allowed me to engage with and understand the *mazinaabikiniganan* in a deeper and certainly more nuanced way. (Twance, 2019, p. 1321)

Finally, Deer (2016), Twance (2019), and Stelmach et al. (2017) engaged with Indigenous methodologies and epistemologies with a transformational goal in mind: to encourage change in education for the benefit of Indigenous youth. This, too, ties into their positionalities because it occurred through their emic research:

To transform education for Indigenous peoples, we need to learn about our histories, our territories, our ways of being in the world, and ultimately, ourselves ... For Indigenous peoples, exploring *mazinaabikiniganan* as Land education is a way to decolonize and re-

inhabit Land and to explore and affirm our own identities, knowledge, and beliefs.
(Twance, 2019, p. 1321)

On the other hand, Robinson et al. (2016) signal early on their positionality as outsiders and the fact that they would do everything to respect Indigenous ways of knowing and learning: “As Euro-Canadian scholars, we entered into our conversations acknowledging and respecting Indigenous ways of knowing and doing” (p. 6). Further along the concept of positionality or “location” is addressed directly and connected to the right to conduct Indigenous research:

We identify as Euro-Canadian scholars. We share a history of teaching experiences within different Canadian Aboriginal communities. Moreover, since moving to the academe, we have developed working and research relationships and partnerships with a number of Mi’kmaw people and communities. We believe that these relationships and partnerships have enabled us to develop the requisite ‘trust, rapport and authentic communication patterns’ (Chilisa, 2012, p. 34) necessary to engage in research with participants. (p.7)

Interestingly, in Robinson et al. (2016) what is necessary to engage with Indigenous participants is mentioned, but no reference is made to what is necessary to engage with Indigenous epistemologies. How, then, can researchers ensure that they are “imbued with an Indigenous sensibility inclusive of Indigenous community knowledge” (Stelmach, et al., 2017, p. 5)? This lack of statement about Indigenous epistemologies in Robinson et al. (2016) clearly shows how subjective is one’s appreciation of one’s own positionality and of the learning and training foundations needed to conduct Indigenous research. For some researchers, collaborations and partnerships are the necessary foundation for conducting proper Indigenous research, regardless of one’s background:

We believe we are now better *positioned* to do more meaningful follow-up research. In addition to this, we also recognize that we are on a research journey. And unlike most of the other educational research we do – which can sometimes be started and finished within a few months – this is more likely a life-course inquiry. Given our relationships we have forged with our Indigenous partners in beginning this research, we are hopeful that we can build on these partnerships and create additional opportunities for future collaborations. (Robinson et al., 2016, p. 17)

For other researchers, it is clearly an Indigenous “sensitivity” that is the necessary foundation for Indigenous research: “the Indigenous research design was guided by teachings emerging primarily from Plains Cree Saulteaux cultures and traditions, the Indigenous background of the Indigenous researchers” (Stelmach et al., 2017. p. 5).

Indigenous Research in Food Sovereignty

The topic of food sovereignty is diverse and multifaceted, as it is equally related to health, wellness, and nutrition as it is to governance, territorial rights, and traditional knowledge. The following studies approached the topic from slightly different angles: “Feasting for Change” was centred more on knowledge creation and preservation (Bagelman, et al., 2016), while “Reclaiming food security in the Mohawk community of Kahnawà:ke” was guided more by sustainable self-determination (Delormier et al., 2018). Finally, “Understanding food sovereignty through an Indigenous research paradigm” offers insights into the food-related challenges that Indigenous peoples face (Martens, et al., 2016).

Indigenous Methodologies and Food Sovereignty.

All the included studies related to food can be considered Indigenous research because they were conducted in close consultation with Indigenous partners. The “Feasting for Change” study

took its leadership specifically from First Nations Elders, who identified feasting as a culturally relevant research method. Feasting, or “Setting the Table,” brought people from different Indigenous communities together to share food and to exchange stories (Bagelman et al., 2016, p. 1). The stories shared were both about the loss of culinary knowledge and the value of revitalizing food practices. This method was so appreciated that after the first feast was organized by T’Sou-ke First Nation (BC), neighbouring communities articulated the desire to use feasting as “a platform for Elders to share knowledge with youth and with their community” (Bagelman et al., 2016, p. 9). As feasting included eating together and sharing knowledge, this method also exemplified how Indigenous knowledge is both embodied and spiritual:

The method underlying Feasting for Change is thus one defined by an intercultural, interdisciplinary collaboration that brings together Indigenous peoples, community organizations, Indigenous health agencies and the university. This relationship is rooted in First Nations protocol. (Bagelman et al., 2016, p. 10)

Other data-collecting methods used in the studies reviewed were interviews with Elders as cultural advocates and practitioners of traditional food knowledge (Delormier et al., 2018) and conversations with Elders (Martens et al., 2016).

Indigenous Epistemologies and Food-Related Research.

The Indigenous epistemologies used in these studies all underline the deep and intimate relationship of Indigenous people to the land that sustains them. Martens et al. (2016), for example, used “hands” as their main theoretical metaphor to represent how Indigenous epistemology is embodied and experiential: “Experience as epistemology was used to reflect the methods, or tools to conduct this research” (p. 26). The use of symbols, stories, and therefore metaphors was also seen as an essential aspect of Indigenous knowledge. Hands as a metaphor for Indigenous food

sovereignty underlines the close relationship of Indigenous peoples to the land and how this relationship “requires hands at work” or “hands tending to food systems” (p. 29). Martens et al. (2016) also combined the hands metaphor with a “circle model” to frame their research. The circle model refers to relationality within Indigenous thought, as represented by the circle. In the context of this research, this model was about prioritizing fruitful relationships among people, with the land, and between the researcher and the research ideas. The circle model was also “loosely informed by the medicine wheel concepts of growth as change,” which refers to the natural cycles of seasonal change and growth (Martens et al., 2016. p. 30).

Delormier et al. (2018) used a conceptual framework of “sustainable self-determination,” which focused more on food sovereignty and revitalizing Indigenous ways of living and the cultural practices that sustain them (p. 5). This framework was inspired by Cherokee political scientist Jeff Corntassel and outlines the issue of food sovereignty in terms of self-determination and land dispossession. Indeed, food sovereignty cannot be considered outside the social and political contexts of “colonial relationships” that continue to remove Indigenous peoples from their lands and sever them from their life-sustaining agricultural and hunting activities.

Researcher Positionality and Food-Related Research.

Two interesting positions can be contrasted in these two studies. Martens et al. (2016) describe themselves as a mixed research team made up of three Indigenous researchers (Cree) and one Settler researcher. They affirm that despite these different positions, they had a common positionality as “outsiders” to the communities where the research took place (p. 24). This means that, despite having Indigenous researchers on the team, the lack of prior relationships with the communities involved in the study made them outsiders. This did not inhibit the expression of the

lead author's Indigenous voice, nor the consistency of his Indigenous worldview when conducting the research (Martens et al., 2016).

In contrast, Delormier et al. (2018) describe themselves as a team of Kahnawà:ke community members who do research from the perspective of Haudenosaunee traditional teachings. Although these researchers do not live in the community due to their professional lives, they describe themselves as “insiders” to the community's traditions and worldview. They also describe it's the study's design and direction by Mohawk researchers as strengths and how this contributed to the “honouring of Kanein'kehà:ka methodologies” (p.14). The value of this research, then, lies not only in the material collected and the analysis and interpretation of the data but also in the capacity of the researchers to envision the importance of food security from the Indigenous perspective of the community involved.

Indigenous Social Work Research

The two articles of this sub-section are both by authors St-Denis and Walsh (2016, 2017). They explore, at different points in time, what it means to be Indigenous within the practice of social work.

Indigenous Methodologies in Social Work: Autoethnography.

The chosen Indigenous methodology for these studies was autoethnography. Autoethnography is a narrative form of self-inquiry that allowed St-Denis, as an Indigenous researcher, to “systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience” (St-Denis & Walsh, 2016, p. 2). This method was chosen because it acknowledges the importance of the accrued subjective lived experience of an Indigenous person struggling to reclaim their heritage. The first study delved into the process of reclaiming an Indigenous identity; it deconstructed this process into the five phases of “awakening, exploring, indigenizing, belonging

and emerging as a Warrior” (St-Denis & Walsh, 2016, p. 2). The second study also used autoethnography, this time to explore what it means to be an Indigenous social worker. The researchers write that this method was chosen once again to “enrich our understanding, expand our awareness, increase our sensitivities and provide insights that can lead to practical action” (St-Denis & Walsh, 2017, p. 10).

Epistemological Foundations for Research in Social Work.

In terms of the theoretical framework used, both these studies situated themselves within a post-colonial or anti-colonial paradigm (St-Denis & Walsh, 2017). Decolonizing research involves theory and practice, so it necessarily entails a revalorization of Indigenous ways of knowing: “Decolonizing social work from post-colonial and anti-colonial frameworks supports re-connection to Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing, not only in an academic discourse, but also, in the context of lived experiences” (St-Denis & Walsh, 2017, p. 53). An Indigenous epistemological framework consequently goes hand in hand with an anti-colonial framework because the process of decolonizing the practice of social work leads to indigenizing it, which entails that “social workers and social service agencies provide Indigenous peoples access to Elders and traditional healing practices” (St-Denis & Walsh, 2017, p. 54). The main aim of such epistemological frameworks is to reframe the practice and experience of social work from an Indigenous perspective to advocate for the introduction of Indigenous ways of healing into the practice of social work. According to the authors, this must be done even when met with resistance from the establishment:

In advocating for culturally appropriate ways to serve urban Indigenous peoples and ways to honour the preferences of those we serve, I have encountered resistance ... This direct experience of resisting, and at times confronting, the dominant discourse reinforced by

those who refuse to open their hearts and minds to Indigenous ways of addressing and resolving life challenges has been physically, mentally, and emotionally draining for me. This is hard work. Thankfully, I have found refuge and strength in ceremony, particularly the sweat lodge, and in spending many hours speaking with my Elder for guidance. (St-Denis & Walsh, 2017, p. 57)

Researcher Positionality in Social Work.

In second half of the quote above, St-Denis & Walsh (2017) underline how the work of Indigenizing the practice of social work is deeply tied to researcher positionality and entails a self-reflexive stance in research. Moreover, they say that the use of autoethnography as a research methodology leads to such a stance. St-Denis, as the Indigenous researcher, clearly explains how the teachings of Elders and the Indigenous healing practices she engages in are part of her own personal philosophy. In her study of her cultural experience, she shares how uncovering and reclaiming her Indigenous heritage has been a challenging, long-life journey (St-Denis & Walsh, 2016). She also shares intimate moments (such as a sweat lodge ceremony) that led to her decision to embark on that journey. Finally, she also discloses how she was guided through dreams that showed this was the right path for her (e.g., dreams with grizzly bears, which were subsequently interpreted by Elders).

Interestingly, the narrative of St-Denis' awakening exemplifies how an Indigenous epistemology is an embodied philosophical stance that requires receptiveness to knowledge from unconventional sources, such as spirits (represented by grizzly bears appearing repeatedly in dreams and during a vision quest) and Elders (St-Denis & Walsh, 2016, p. 7–8). Engaging with Indigenous epistemologies also leads to personal transformation. In this way, for St-Denis &

Walsh (2016, 2017), locating oneself is an ongoing process of evolution, as one's own identity is constantly developing (p. 52).

For example, in 2016, St-Denis explains how she has been in the process of reclaiming her Indigenous heritage since 2011 and how her positionality shifted from seeing herself as a French-Canadian woman with some Indigenous ancestry to seeing herself as an Indigenous woman: "I now had the opportunity to reclaim my Indigenous ancestry, a right taken from my ancestors as a consequence of colonization" (p. 8).

Further on, in 2017, St-Denis explains how this process continued to unfold, as she was given an Indigenous name by Elders: "I am also *Mistahaya Maskwa Iskwew*, which means grizzly bear woman in Cree, a spirit name given to me by a ceremonialist Cree Elder who provides ongoing guidance. I am also *oskâpêwis* (helper in Cree) to my Elders and community" (St-Denis & Walsh, 2017, p. 52). St-Denis also uses her autoethnography to include her co-author, Walsh, who she describes as an ally to Indigenous peoples: "Christine Walsh has been my academic advisor on this journey. She is a white, feminist, settler who has collaborated in community-based action-oriented research with Indigenous peoples, families, and communities for more than 20 years" (p. 52).

In sum, St-Denis's fluid positionality is heightened by her autoethnographic narrative, which brings us on her intimate journey of self-discovery. This form of personal storytelling is completely coherent with her Indigenous epistemology and with her quest to live according to Indigenous teachings and offer them to the Indigenous people she encounters as a social worker. One could say that her personal involvement with Indigenous healing practices (e.g., sweat lodge) and with Elders is what most qualifies her to conduct Indigenous research on herself, as her experience as an Indigenous woman is the object of her research.

Discussion of Results

This scoping review identified 46 articles published between 1997 and 2020 as Indigenous research, which were subsequently analyzed. This scoping review has demonstrated that there is an increasing scholarly interest in conducting Indigenous research. A constant rise in the number of publications in this field signals a surge in efforts to decolonize, transform, mobilize, and heal through the practice of Indigenous research (Smith, 1999). Furthermore, within this great diversity of studies and considering the thematic analysis across disciplines (e.g., education, health, and social work), what stands out is that researcher positionality has an enormous impact on *how* Indigenous research is conducted.

Researcher positionality is crucial because the epistemological and methodological choices of researchers flow directly from their prior personal experiences Indigenous contexts, whether these experiences are professional or familial. Using examples from the reviewed studies to illustrate this, the discussion section argues that beyond the research topic or the context, the most important determining factor of epistemological frameworks and methodological choices is the situatedness of researchers within Indigenous communities and within Indigenous thought.

Considering Situatedness in Indigenous research

Referring to the concept of “situatedness” presented in the literature review, the following discussion section examines closely how the researchers of all 46 articles take on positionality in their research. The implications of this for their epistemological and methodological choices are also discussed.

Locating Researchers: Mapping Researcher Positionality in Indigenous Research.

Looking closely at positionality in the selected Indigenous research articles revealed that most authors recognize the importance of situating themselves in the research process. Most of

them systematically engaged in a self-reflexive examination of their own positionality and discuss how this influences them as knowledge producers. Not only that, but most researchers considered this exercise to be integral to the journey of Indigenous research. All researchers also recognized that history has put a weight on their shoulders and that they need to acknowledge how their identity as Indigenous or non-Indigenous scholars has put them in a *de facto* relationship to Indigenous peoples and to research in Indigenous contexts. Additionally, when discussing their positionality, most researchers reflected on the principle of relationality and on the importance of creating and maintaining respectful relationships, collaborations, and partnerships with Indigenous peoples.

The consideration of relationality as central to Indigenous research can be linked to the concept of “ethical relationality” developed by Donald (2012). Ethical relationality is defined as “an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experience position us in relation to each other” (Donald, 2012, p. 535). Most of the reviewed researchers engaged in ethical relationality and considered how their position situated them in opposition to or in alliance with Indigenous peoples. This was especially true of researchers who identified and defined themselves as Settlers. Several of them evaluated the burden of this position and consciously sought to become “treaty partners” or allies. Lynnn Gehl, an Algonquin Anishinaabe-kwe scholar, developed “The Ally Bill of Responsibilities” in which the principles of allyship are presented (Gehl poster, n/a). Some of these principles are readily apparent in the ways that non-Indigenous scholars presented their involvement in Indigenous research.

Dumbrill and Green (2008) explicitly indicate that they sought to disrupt dominant ways of doing research in social work. This reflects Gehl’s first principle: “Do not act out of guilt, but

rather out of a genuine interest in challenging the larger oppressive power structures.” Kerr and Parent (2015) also discuss the privilege that comes with being a Settler scholar and seeking to unlearn colonial ways of doing research in terms of their positionality. This can be related to another principle of allyship: “Allies are aware of their privileges and openly discuss them. This action will also serve to challenge larger oppressive power structures” (Gehl poster, n/a).

Finally, all researchers respected the principle of privileging the benefit of the community, to “Ensure that they are supporting a leader’s, group of leaders’, or a movement’s efforts that serve the needs of the people,” (Gehl poster, n/a) through their use of a participatory and collaborative research approach. The principle of benefiting the community, which is important for maintaining good reciprocal relationships, is especially relevant to this review, which reveals a correlation between researcher positionality and relationality in Indigenous research. The more a researcher is centred in an Indigenous-insider position, the closer their ties and relationships to Indigenous communities are and the more their knowledge is situated within Indigenous knowledge systems.

Having stated all the points of agreement among researchers concerning positionality, there seems to be less consensus around what qualifies a person to do Indigenous research in the first place. There is no agreement among researchers regarding the determining factors in their training, in their relationships, and in their sensibilities that position them to make legitimate use of Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies when conducting research. This is a central question in Indigenous research; when looking for answers, one must bear in mind that one of the main principles of Indigenous research is that Indigenous peoples should control their own knowledge systems and, ideally, conduct their own research in an effort to decolonize it (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Smith, 1999). As Indigenous scholars such as Battiste (2008) have pointed out, Indigenous knowledge systems should be understood from an Indigenous perspective and,

ideally, learned in the Indigenous languages that originally articulated them. Indigenous knowledge systems could become commodified if they are used indiscriminately and without consideration for the people to whom this knowledge belongs (Battiste, 2008).

Based on the studies presented, what are the determining factors that push researchers to conduct Indigenous research? 1) Is it the years of training in Indigenous studies that enable a researcher to conduct Indigenous research? 2) Is it the number of fruitful collaborations with Indigenous partners? Or 3) is it a researcher's own Indigenous sensibility "inclusive of Indigenous community knowledge" (Stelmach et al, 2017, p. 5) that qualifies them to do Indigenous research?

Drawing a Spectrum of Researcher Positionality.

To underline the determining factors that researchers identified as enabling them to conduct Indigenous research, I propose to conceive of a "positionality spectrum." The notion of a "spectrum" is often used to describe a band of colors, as in a rainbow, produced by a separation of the components of light by their different degrees of refraction. Within the concept of a spectrum is the notion that there are no bound discrete units but rather a continuum of variables that make up a phenomenon. The notion of a spectrum can also be used to understand human experiences. For example, gender can be conceived of as an experience occurring within a spectrum that is influenced by multiple social and cultural factors rather than as binary, given biological condition. This helps us consider how gender is not static and genetic but an evolving aspect of human experience.

In the same way, positionality is not a static or given condition but rather a dynamic and evolving aspect of a researcher's identity and experience that can be located along a continuum. In the case of positionality in Indigenous research, the determining factor influencing one's situatedness on the spectrum of possibilities is relationality. Relationality plays a central role

within Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies and, therefore, is also crucial to researcher positionality. Each researcher's relationality situates them along a continuum from the most insider position (emic research) to the most outsider position.

The Insider Position: The Starting Point of Indigenous Research.

The insider position signals research done from within an Indigenous culture and worldview. According to Indigenous scholars like Smith (1999) and Kovach (2009), insider or emic research is the essence of Indigenous research because it corresponds to the process of reclaiming and healing through research (Smith, 1999). Researchers in this position situate themselves in relation to a specific Indigenous community and place or land. Often, a direct link is made between the choice to conduct Indigenous research and having or reclaiming an Indigenous identity and culture. Research from this position is conceived as a form resistance, as a social action, and as a praxis of liberation leading to self-determination.

Graveline (2001) exemplifies this positionality through her research and teaching, which seek to transform both post-secondary education and research. She accomplishes this through her poetic, metaphoric rendition of the data collected during her "journey as an Aboriginal academic exploring the usefulness of traditional knowledge and ceremony in contemporary university classrooms" (p. 6). Indigenous researchers in this position also openly discuss their close relationships and special ties to Elders in Indigenous communities. Research from this position correlates with a sense of responsibility for the welfare of fellow Indigenous community members.

Bell (2013b), for example, states that the motivation behind her study of culturally relevant education is her sense of responsibility to Indigenous children: "I am dedicated to the healing that needs to be done in Anishinaabe communities and I have dedicated my life to that task, through protecting and raising up our children to be strong Anishinaabe in spirit, mind, body, and heart,

through the process of culture-based education” (p. 36). Consequently, in this position, there is an identification as an Indigenous person with the issues affecting Indigenous communities and peoples. Indigenous researchers signal this identification by including themselves when they discuss these issues by the use of possessive plural pronouns: “We cannot be waiting for our youth to reach post-secondary levels before they feel their identities are valued, respected and reinforced” (Restoule, 2005, p. 130).

Moreover, a person with an insider position relates to Indigenous knowledge in a personal, emotional, and spiritual way. Indigenous philosophical concepts are not seen and experienced as just abstract constructs but are life-changing teachings that flow from a line of ancestors to Indigenous researchers: “our cultural professors continue to nurture, inform, teach and guide us” (Sterling, 2002, p. 10). There is, therefore, an underlying responsibility to protect these teachings from this position and to make sure they are used wisely in the practice of Indigenous research.

Finally, Indigenous scholars often state that their research recognizes and embodies the validity of Indigenous knowledge. Thus, it gives a tangible form to the struggle for Indigenous knowledge to find its place within the academy: “we are working toward recognition of the validity of our culture and ways of knowing, teaching and learning” (Deer, 2016, p. 22).

The Outsider Position: The Ally.

At the other side of the spectrum, we find the outsider position, which is most often equated with Settler or non-Indigenous researchers. This position is associated with a Eurocentric worldview and training. Researchers in this position engage in working and academic relationships with Indigenous partners. These relationships are professional and personal and are often based on a specific collaborative research project. For example, in the “Fish-WIKS Partnership Project,” Latulippe (2015) worked with and for the Assembly of First Nations to look at sustainable fishery

management. Researchers in this position have learned and studied Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies from the outside, meaning in a theoretical way and not as an extension of their own Indigenous worldview. The research process is therefore not necessarily a deepening of one's own cultural identity, nor does it necessarily correspond to the exploration of teachings experienced first-hand while growing up. The outsider, or Treaty partner, is a therefore an intentional conscious position that non-Indigenous researchers can take in order to participate as allies in the struggle of Indigenous people.

As discussed in the section locating researchers, some of the principles of allyship (Gehl, n/a) involve non-Indigenous partners taking action to disturb dominant ways of doing things. For example, researchers in this position discuss how they can unlearn Settler colonialism and make space for Indigenous knowledge systems within the academy: "those from dominant locations must move aside so that those from marginalized groups can re-claim their identities and un-learn internalized oppression" (Dumbrill & Green, 2008, p. 495).

Furthermore, the ally, while actively disrupting settler colonialism and Eurocentric ways of producing knowledge, must simultaneously recognize the limits of their own position when conducting Indigenous research: "I am fortunate to be taught by Indigenous scholars and community members about ways I can engage with Indigeneity as a Settler, and the complications related to my identity, as I work to create transformative opportunities in educational contexts" (Kerr & Parent, 2015, p. 4).

Lastly, in this position, Settler researchers must ask themselves how they can most appropriately engage with Indigenous epistemologies without falling into the trap of cultural appropriation. This delicate task requires them to be grounded in their own culture, without shame or guilt, because as Gehl states, allies "Are fully grounded in their own ancestral history and

culture. Effective allies must sit in this knowledge with confidence and pride; otherwise, the ‘wannabe syndrome’ could merely undermine the Indigenous people’s efforts” (Gehl poster, n/a). Latulippe (2015) does this by grounding herself in her own culture and then seeking to establish a nation-to-nation relationships with Indigenous peoples through her research: “In my mixed methodology, the treaty relationship emerged as a powerful orienting device. For all treaty people, the nation-to-nation relationship offers an invitation to engage knowledge systems in a spirit of respect and reciprocity” (p. 1).

In acknowledging their outsider location, the outsider seeks to engage with Indigenous peoples in respectful ways, encouraging reconciliation and fruitful collaborations: “As Euro-Canadian scholars, we entered into our conversation acknowledging and respecting Indigenous ways of knowing and doing” (Robinson et al., 2016, p. 6).

Middle Ground Position: Collaborations.

The mid-point of this spectrum could be embodied not by a single person but by a collective body or team of researchers uniting both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives. This middle ground position is interesting in that it effectively achieves insider and outsider perspectives simultaneously. In this way, close collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers can give way to mutual enrichment and can serve a research project in interesting ways.

As an outsider, Thorpe learned to follow Inuit protocols and adjust to Inuit rhythm. Her foreign status was also used by the whole research team to ask seemingly naïve questions that called for long, detailed explanations. Inuit researchers were seen by community members as not needing to ask such questions, so for the sake of the project, the outsider was given the task to ask them (Thorpe, 1997). Such collaborations have yielded interesting results especially in mental health research and substance use treatment, areas in which western scientific approaches have

been combined with Indigenous healing principles and practices, as exemplified by the Two-eyed Seeing approach (Marsh et al., 2016) and by the concept of “Ethical Space” (Sasakamoose et al., 2017).

Finally, the notion of a continuum of positionalities signals that many nuances and grey areas are not listed above. For example, a researcher might explicitly state that they are Indigenous and are grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems, yet they might still feel as an outsider in an Indigenous community because of their university training (Martens et al., 2016). Another element that Indigenous researchers might struggle with is maintaining an observer role in a context so familiar and close to home (Deer, 2016). There are also researchers of mixed origin, having both Indigenous and non-Indigenous ancestry, who actively engage with both worldviews and epistemologies and refuse to choose a ‘side’ but rather propose a blended or mixed approach (Sasakamoose et al., 2017).

Considering these grey areas, the positionalities identified are not set in stone, and they are overlapping. For the sake of clarity, though, the table below (Table 11) summarizes the three main positions presented above and attempts to map where each of the reviewed research projects stands on the spectrum of positionality.

Table 11

Locating Positionality in Indigenous Research

Emic/insider research:	Insider/outsider research:	Outsider research:
Self-identified Indigenous researcher. Close ties to Indigenous community. Family ties to community members. Privileges ties with Elders. Relationship with a land/place. Ecological place-based knowledge; Knowledge/familiarity with language. Knowledge/familiarity with culture.	Mixed research team that <i>claims</i> and <i>uses</i> both positionalities in research. Uses a <i>mixed-methods</i> approach with some Indigenous and some non-Indigenous methods/epistemologies.	Research team made up exclusively of Euro-Canadian researchers. Trained in Euro-Canadian education. Working relationships with Indigenous participants/communities/organizations. ‘Book knowledge’ of Indigenous epistemologies, not lived as a personal philosophy. Recognition of Settler colonialism.

Epistemology lived as a personal philosophy/way of life. Personal involvement with research communities, Prioritizes that research benefits communities.	Uses an Indigenous theoretical framework based on the Indigenous culture/origins of the Indigenous researchers.	Working actively to disrupt colonialism and decolonize research. Seeking long-lasting relationships with Indigenous cultures, but this might not be possible beyond the research project as such.
Research studies 1997–2015		
Graveline, F. J. (2001, 2002) Sterling (2002) Restoule (2005) Edge & McCallum (2006) Alteo (2009) Lavallee (2009) Iseke (2010, 2011) Bell (2013b)	Thorpe (1997, 1998) Hanson & Hampton (2000) Dumbrill & Green (2008) Clark et al. (2010) Lavallee & Poole (2009) Kitchen et al. (2010) Socha et al. (2012) Lavoie et al. (2014) Pazderka et al. (2014) Kerr & Parent (2015)	Healey (2014). Latulippe (2015).
Research studies 2016–2020		
Deer (2016) Delormier et al. (2017) McGinnis et al. (2019) Sasakamoose et al. (2017) Smith et al. (2019) Twance (2019)	Bagelman et al. (2016) Martens et al. (2016) Gesink et al. (2016) Howell et al. (2016) Marsh et al. (2016) Morris (2016) Tobias & Richmond (2016) Stelmach et al. (2017) St-Denis & Walsh (2016, 2017) Marsh et al. (2018) Petrucka et al. (2016) Maranzan et al. (2018) Rowe et al. (2020) Freeman et al. (2020)	Robinson et al. (2016) Leigh Drost (2019)

What stands out from this analysis and mapping of positionalities in Canadian Indigenous research (1997–2020) is that collaborations integrating insider and outsider positionalities are the most prominent form of Indigenous research. Cross-cultural relationships based on equality, mutual respect, and reciprocity therefore seem to be an important factor enabling researchers to conduct Indigenous research.

What is obvious from this review is that Indigenous research is not predominantly conducted by Indigenous researchers alone but is rather a collective effort of both Indigenous researchers and non-Indigenous allies to decolonize academic research and disrupt Eurocentric

ways of producing knowledge. Furthermore, collaborative Indigenist research stands out as a concrete form of reconciliation in Canada. If we return to the foundational principles of Indigenous research, this is completely compatible with them, as illustrated by Smith's (1999) explanation of the role of non-Indigenous researchers in Māori research:

‘Can a non-Indigenous researcher carry out Kaupapa Māori research?’ The answer on current definitions is more complex. Perhaps it might be read, ‘A non-indigenous, non-Māori person can be involved in Kaupapa Māori research, but not on their own; and if they were involved in such research, they would have to position themselves as a non-indigenous person. (p. 186)

This can also be linked to Gehl's ally principles, which dictate that allies must clearly ground themselves in their own cultures as non-Indigenous peoples to be effective allies. This, in turn, is key to the process of decolonizing research and to the reconciliation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples through research, as “non-indigenous peoples have an obligation to support Māori research (as Treaty partners). And secondly, some non-indigenous researchers, who have a genuine desire to support Māori research ought to be included, because they are useful allies and colleagues in research” (Smith, 1999, p. 187). Thus, non-Indigenous researchers should not conduct this form of research on their own because the whole goal of Indigenous research is the empowerment of Indigenous peoples, not the reproduction of colonial frameworks. Empowerment means that Indigenous peoples have control over the investigations conducted into Indigenous lives, and it also requires that these investigations be *located* within “an alternative conception of the world from which solutions and cultural aspirations can be generated” (Smith, 1999, p. 187).

Internal Coherence: The Importance of Aligning Positionality, Epistemology, and Methodologies

This last subtheme brings together the three components of researcher positionality, epistemology, and methodology within Indigenous research. As has been stated before, methodologies have epistemic content, so differing epistemological positionings result in different methodologies. Furthermore, epistemology profoundly shapes a researcher's conceptualization of participants and of their role in the research process (Carter & Little, 2007). In this way, it is a researcher's epistemological stance that determines whether participants are passive subjects to be "studied" or if participants have agency in the research process and are co-creators. Finally, epistemology has a great influence on how a researcher communicates their own position, how they tell their own story, and how they let their voice and the voice of the research participants be heard (Carter & Little, 2007). In the discussion of how positionality, epistemology, and methodology are connected, internal agreement or coherence is a central consideration.

Looking at researcher situatedness within Indigenous research pushes us to determine whether there is coherence among a researcher's position, their epistemic stance, and their proposed methodology. This is an important exercise, as it draws out the true value of the research conducted. Finding ways to efficiently assess qualitative research is related to the ongoing debate over what is considered good qualitative research. According to Carter and Little (2007), a good qualitative research study is marked by inner concordance and "should be able to explain itself by presenting and arguing for an internally consistent set of elements: research epistemology (justification of knowledge), methodology (justification of method) and method (research action)" (p. 1326).

Additionally, in terms of Indigenous research, it behooves us to consider the internal consistency between epistemology, methodology, methods, and researcher situatedness. As has been stated before, Indigenous knowledge systems, as embodied epistemologies, are not simply theoretical constructions but are often seen and lived as spiritual paths. These epistemologies have accompanying practices and ceremonies that mirror and enact the teachings of the Indigenous cultural traditions from which they stem. The Medicine Wheel, for example, used in several of the health-related research projects reviewed, it is not just a conceptualization of health; it is an actual path for healing and is embodied through the sweat lodge ceremony. In this way, epistemology extends into and informs methodology, and both have their source in researcher situatedness. Therefore, the lived experience of researchers must be carefully taken into consideration when assessing the internal coherence of epistemologies and methodologies in Indigenous research.

Finally, to make explicit some of these connections between researcher situatedness, epistemologies, and methodologies in Indigenous research, the Table 12 below links each position on the spectrum of positionality, described above, to the epistemological and methodological choices made in some of the reviewed research studies. The table also provide examples to illustrate these ideas.

Table 12

Correlations between Positionalities, Methodologies, and Epistemologies in Indigenous Research

Researcher positionality	Relationality with Indigenous communities	Epistemological choices	Methodological choices
Insider/Indigenous positionality: Indigenous knowledge system grounded in a place/land. Lived as a personal path/philosophy. Close ties with Elders. Knowledge quest as a personal journey.	Strong, sustained long-term relationships with Indigenous peoples. Ancestral ties to a community and/or family ties to community members. Personal involvement/close ties with Indigenous communities leading to	Clear articulation of an Indigenous epistemology with identified cultural/ancestral origins. Elders as central to knowledge production. Examples: Nicole Bell (2013b): Anishinaabe cultural-based education based	The methods chosen are clearly linked to the epistemological framework. Methods privilege Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. Examples: Anishinaabe Symbol-Based Reflection corresponds to

Strong relationship with a specific land/place: ecological place-based knowledge prioritized. Knowledge of/familiarity with an Indigenous language & culture.	prioritization of research participants as co-creators of knowledge.	on Anishinaabe teachings. Smith et al. (2019) and the “Sweetgrass and porcupine quill box” used epistemology-based Ojibwe culture.	Anishinaabe epistemology in Lavallee (2009). Smith et al. (2019) and the “Sweetgrass and porcupine quill box” used methodology based in Ojibwe culture.
Insider/outsider research: Mixed research team, including both positionalities and using both in research.	Strong, sustained relationships with Indigenous peoples. Ancestral ties to community and/or family ties to community members. Personal involvement/close ties with Indigenous communities leading to prioritization that research benefits these communities. Treaty partners: outsider allies working alongside Indigenous scholars.	Uses mainly an Indigenous theoretical framework based on the Indigenous culture/origins of the Indigenous researchers. Example: Thorpe (1997, 1998) and Thorpe et al., (2001) in the “Tuktuk and Nogat” project used IQ for its epistemological framework. Morris (2016) also used IQ as a theoretical framework in collaboration with an Inuit women’s association.	Uses a mixed-methods approach with some Indigenous and some non-Indigenous research methods. Also uses to its advantage the cultural differences of researchers: Indigenous researchers may conduct interviews, lead sharing circles with Indigenous participants, for example. Example: Morris (2016) used surveys and talking circles with Inuit Elders and Inuit facilitators.
Outsider research: Research team made up exclusively of Euro-Canadian researchers. Assumed Settler position. Positioned as allies. Book knowledge of Indigenous epistemologies, not lived as a personal philosophy. Euro-Canadian education. Working relationships with Indigenous participants/communities/organizations.	Outsider allies work alongside Indigenous community partners. Working relationships with Indigenous. Good collaborations. Seeking long-lasting relationships with Indigenous cultures but this might not be possible beyond the research project as such.	Critical, anti-colonial, and decolonizing theoretical frameworks. Contours of Indigenous epistemology are sometimes glossed over and vague, not based on a specific culture. For example: Robinson et al. (2016) worked on Mi’kmaw culturally relevant physical education with no specific reference to Mi’kmaw epistemology.	Use of decolonizing methodologies. Engagement with Indigenous methods as an effort to accommodate, honour, and give voice to Indigenous participants. Example: Conversational method used by Robinson et al. (2016).

Conclusion of Scoping Review of Canadian Indigenous Research 1997–2020

This scoping review, based on 46 studies conducted across disciplines in Canada between 1997 and 2020, found that Indigenous research has come into prominence over the last two decades. Furthermore, this review has discovered that the most prominent form of Indigenous research is collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. These trends point

to the decreasing marginalization of Indigenous knowledge systems in the academy, yet, paradoxically, Indigenous researchers remain few in number. Considering this, it is crucial to reflect on the positionality of researchers conducting Indigenous research. Indeed, it is important to consider whether there is coherence between a researchers' position, their epistemic stance, and their methodology, as this protects Indigenous knowledge systems from misrepresentation and distortion. How can this be done in an academic context? By making sure that the Indigenous research partners are involved alongside non-Indigenous researchers in elaborating their theoretical frameworks and methodologies so that these are grounded in relationships and in specific place-based cultures (Hart et al., 2017). Finally, the task of protecting Indigenous knowledge cannot fall only on the shoulders of Indigenous partners; non-Indigenous researchers must also take it upon themselves to internalize the principles of Indigenous research outlined by Indigenous scholars.

Chapter 4: Conversations with Indigenous Scholars

Introduction

This chapter presents the Indigenous conversation methodology and the thematic analysis used to extract the essence of nine conversations with the eight Indigenous scholars. After the methodology is presented, each researcher's discussion of their journey into Indigenous research will be presented in their own words. Then, the two main themes of these conversations will be discussed in detail.

These online conversations took place and were recorded during the spring and summer of 2021. They constitute the final step of the scoping review methodology, the expert consultation, and as such enrich and add a great depth to my initial findings (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005).

Methodology: An Indigenous Conversational Approach

These online "meetings" with experienced Indigenous scholars were conducted following Kovach's (2010) conversational method. During these dialogues, there was an exchange on the nature of Indigenous research. This method was chosen due to the nature of the research conducted. Considering the participants in this study, this method was chosen as the most appropriate and coherent. The following quote by Kovach (2010) captures the essence of this method and reflects well what took place during these conversations:

The conversational method employed is best described as a dialogic approach to gathering knowledge that is built upon an Indigenous relational tradition. It utilized open-ended, semi-structured interview questions to prompt conversation where participant and researcher co-create knowledge. (p. 44)

Moreover, because the nature of Indigenous research is *relational*, a relational approach that entailed reciprocity, respect, and trust was required. For this, I did not place myself “outside” my research, nor did I position myself as an “expert.” Rather, I presented myself as a student eager to learn from these professors. I began by talking about myself and my experiences with Indigenous knowledge systems prior to doing research. I also presented the goals of my research, both academic and personal. These conversations were also built on the findings of the scoping review, which constituted the background research needed to approach these researchers and engage them in dialogue.

Personal Invitations

The scoping review led me to discover the work of many Indigenous scholars. From these readings, I developed a list of multidisciplinary Indigenous scholars whose work I thought was exemplary in their respective areas. Using their professional university emails, I sent each researcher a personalized invitation presenting myself and my research (see Appendix A). As I had read their work, my invitations were tailored to their work, and invited them to discuss it further in light of my research. Once they accepted, researchers received a consent form to sign (see Appendix B). Once that was signed, researchers received a summary of the scoping review findings and a copy of the conversation guide to prepare for our conversation (see Appendix C).

My initial aim was to consult with four Indigenous scholars: two “emergent” scholars who had completed their PhDs after 2015 and two “prominent” who had written extensively about Indigenous research methods. The rationale behind this was to gain input from different generations of scholars, as this would enrich the analysis of the evolution of Indigenous research.

I emailed thirty Indigenous scholars across departments and universities. From this initial outreach, five scholars responded positively and accepted to participate in the consultation

exercise. Two were researchers with long-term experience in conducting Indigenous research and in mentoring students (Lavallee and Green), and three were emerging Indigenous scholars (Rowe, Deere, and Wilson Danard). After two conversations, there was a snowball effect; Lavallee recommended that I talk to Professors Lee and Absolon, who both accepted to participate. Once I had seven Indigenous researchers, I wrote to Wilson, who had initially said he was too busy two months earlier and asked him again if he would be interested in participating. This time, he agreed. A total of eight Indigenous researchers agreed to talk to me, which was twice as many as I had initially hoped for.

In my email invitations, I explained that these conversations were not interviews but, as part of the scoping review, were expert consultations. Therefore, I asked the researchers if they would consent to being identified, as this would add great weight to my research (see Appendix A). Table 13 presents the final list of researchers who agreed to talk with me.

Table 13

Final List of Participants

#	Name	Type of researcher
1	Shawn Wilson	Opaskwayak Cree. Professor of Indigenous Research Methodologies applied in Indigenous community contexts; lives and teaches in Australia; author of <i>Research as Ceremony</i> (2008).
2	Kathy Absolon	Anishinaabe. Professor of social work and researcher specialized in Indigenous methodologies; author of <i>Kandossiwin: How we come to Know</i> (2011) (re-edited 2021).
3	Lynn Lavallee	Anishinaabe Metis, citizen of the Metis Nation of Ontario. Professor in social work professor and researcher; Indigenous methodologies; created an Indigenous adaptation of photovoice as a symbol-based Anishinaabe research method.
4	Jacquie Kundoqk Green	Haisla. Director of School of Social Work, University of Victoria. Indigenous methodologies; developed a Haisla knowledge-based methodology.
5	Sandra Deer	Kanien'kehà:ka researcher focused on education; MA and PhD following a Kanien'kehà:ka methodology.
6	Gladys Rowe	Swampy Cree. Professor of health and wellness/social work; developed Muskego Inninuwwuk Cree methodology.
7	Damian Lee	Anishinaabe. Professor of sociology; specialized in Indigenous citizenship and Indigenous governance.
8	Debby Wilson Danard	Anishinaabe. Water knowledge holder.

Calendar and Duration of Conversations

Each conversation was scheduled in advance, and the invited scholars received the conversation guide of 15 questions the day before. Each meeting was intended to be approximately 60 minutes long, with a possible second meeting of 30 minutes (see Appendix B). However, some researchers were very generous with their time and spoke with me longer than 60 minutes see Table 14.

Table 14

List of Conversations with Indigenous Researchers

1.	Lynn Lavallee	06/05/2021	54 minutes
2.	Debby D. Wilson	18/05/2021	150 minutes
3.	Sandra Deer	3/06/2021	166 minutes
4.	Jacquie Kundoqk Green	18/06/2021	154 minutes
5.	Gladys Rowe	21/06/2021	146 minutes
6	Kathy Absolon	22/06/2021 & 23/06/2021	53 minutes 144 minutes
7	Damian Lee	09/08/2021	152 minutes
8.	Shawn Wilson	11/08/2021	70 minutes

Evolution of Conversation Guides

For each conversation, I initially developed 10 to 15 questions related to the issues that came up during the scoping review (Appendix C). Additionally, each conversation had some specific questions related to the work of that researcher. Each conversation guide was made up of open-ended questions, as well as an introductory section during which I presented myself. These guides were sent in advance to researchers. During each conversation, many more issues were discussed than the ones I had put forth in my questions. What became obvious from the very first conversation with Lavallee (in May) was that the insights gained from that conversation had to be included in the next conversation guide. Therefore, the conversation-guide was constantly developing. I did not add questions, or it would have been too long, but rather refined them and

added nuance. This illustrates how “dialogue is an effective method to co-create knowledge in a relational context of a conversation” (Kovach, 2010, p. 45).

In this way, each conversation guide reflected how my own understanding was developing. I also included the comments from the previous scholars in my guide, I identified the scholar, and this created further dialogue. In a sense, each researcher was responding to the issues raised by the preceding researchers and adding their perspective to the overall picture. This made the questions increasingly relevant with each conversation, raising more issues and so that the resulting conversations became richer and richer. Metaphorically speaking, the process was a like a sauce that one keeps stirring and adding new ingredients to; each researcher added their own unique spice, and after several hours of stirring, all these spices had perfectly blended.

Transcripts

The typed conversations (250 pages, single-spaced) represent about 18 hours of conversations. When read in chronological order, they produce a sense of an asynchronous dialogue between all these scholars, as each dialogue builds on the last. The last conversation, which with Shawn Wilson, benefited from all the previous conversations. He gave an online lecture a few weeks later (Bronfman Lecture, October 20, 2021) that was related to what we had discussed. I contacted him again and asked his permission to include the material from that lecture in my thesis. He agreed that I could use the YouTube video, which I later transcribed and of which I sent him a copy (Wilson in Coburn, 2021). This lecture was an important addition to our conversation, as he had developed in greater depth some of the ideas that he had touched on earlier.

Gratitude and Reciprocity

All the researchers who agreed to participate in my research were generous with their words and with their time. Each researcher also subsequently revised their written transcript. All the

researchers made it clear that Indigenous research is their life, that it is tied to *who* they are and *what* they stand for. Their generosity mirrors how deeply they care about the evolution of Indigenous research. I feel privileged that they shared so openly with me their experiences, their frustrations, and their hopes for the future of Indigenous research. They also recognized the value of my research and had encouraging words for me at the end of our conversations. I learned so much more from them than this thesis can encapsulate. As a small token of my gratitude, I sent each researcher a thank you letter and a symbolic gift (gift card). If we had been in person, I would have offered a more personal gift, but as these were online meetings, this seemed like the most appropriate way to show my gratitude.

Thematic Analysis

The analysis of these conversation followed several steps. First, I used a colour-coding method with three colors to identify everything that fell under the three main areas of inquiry and covered the main research question guiding the scoping review: “epistemologies” (green), “methodologies” (pink), and “positionality” (yellow). It soon became obvious that within each of those categories, there were numerous subcategories. Under the larger category of “knowledge” (green), for example, subcategories such as “access to knowledge” emerged. Some subcategories were added by the researchers themselves. Moreover, it was necessary to determine where some topics that had not been touched on in the scoping analysis but that had to be included in the thematic analysis fit within the three main categories. Some of these topics include “race-shifting,” “tokenism,” and “funding.”

Once each conversation was broken down into ordered categories and subcategories, I proceeded to use a “connecting strategy” to link these categories across conversations to find overarching themes (Maxwell, 2013, p. 111). This strategy revealed even larger themes than those

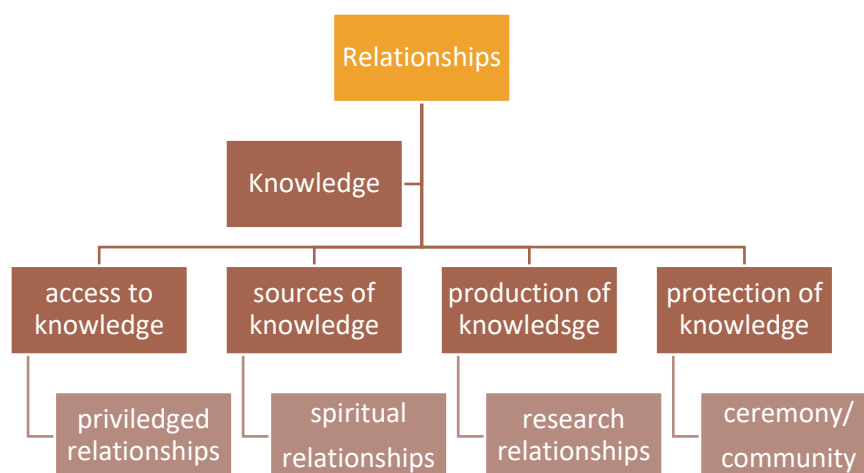
identified by the scoping review, each of which had many different layers and levels of possible analysis (see Figure 4). What finally emerged from this thematic analysis were two overarching themes: “Relationships” and “Positionality.”

“Relationships” is the largest theme; it encompasses the categories of “Indigenous epistemologies” and “methodologies.” The importance of relationships and the many levels at which the principle of “relationality” operates were discussed in detail in the Tree metaphor. It is not surprising that this emerged as the main theme because it is paramount both philosophically and methodologically.

“Positionality” emerged as the second theme, also not surprisingly, as this was a central topic in the scoping review. It is the second theme because it builds on the first in its in-depth discussion of everything related to the “Self-in-Relation” but from the perspective of “the Self as Central” (Absolon, 2011, p. 5).

Figure 5

Thematic Analysis by Layers



Note: This diagram shows, the second and third layers of analysis for only one branch from the larger theme of “Relationships” to illustrate the process by which subthemes emerge in layers, but there are many more branches.

Once these two main themes were discussed, additional, non-thematic chapters emerged that dealt with related but distinct topics (Chapters 5 and 6). These subsequent chapters address the evolution of Indigenous research and the academic environment. These chapters build on the thematic analysis and incorporate parts of it but are essentially more interested in analyzing Indigenous research from a chronological and historical perspective and in assessing change and transformation. Finally, the last chapter of the analysis of conversations has to do with the notion of “congruence” and, while it includes relationality and positionality, has to do primarily with finding strategies to assess Indigenous research.

Initially, I thought that there would also be a chronological parameter of analysis in terms of the different generations of researchers. That would have divided the conversational thematic analysis into two further categories, from the perspective of “seasoned” and of “emergent” scholars. This turned out to be an artificial separation that would have created unnecessary repetitions.

In sum, all the chapters that present analyses of my conversations with Indigenous scholars privileged a “holistic analytical approach” (Maxwell, 2013, p. 12) and sought to connect all the different parts of Indigenous research coherently, while simultaneously making visible the connecting threads. This approach worked well because the nature of Indigenous research is relational and therefore holistic. To approach it in any other way would be incoherent.

Journeys into Indigenous Research

As part of this introduction, and before beginning the thematic analysis, I introduce each researcher using their own words to the greatest extent possible. I did not ask Wilson or Kathy Absolon to talk about their journeys into Indigenous research because in the introductions of their books, *Research as Ceremony* (2008) and *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know* (2011), they retell

their academic journeys in detail, so it would have been redundant and taken precious time away from other topics.

The following introductions correspond to the first question of each conversation, “What led you to do Indigenous research in the first place?” This is an important question, and many researchers pondered it deeply. Some answered succinctly in a few minutes, while for others, this retelling of their life story lasted much longer. In all cases, the answer to this question set the table for the ensuing discussion, and within the answers, one can anticipate the main themes that will be discussed in the thematic analysis (e.g., identity, knowledge, and relationships).

Lynn Lavallee

When I asked Lavallee, an Anishinaabe Metis researcher in social work, what brought her on the path of Indigenous research, she emphasized how this work is deeply tied to her identity and to her intention to respond to the needs of community:

It's who I am. So, when you say, "Indigenous research," you can think about that in many ways. Do you do work on Indigenous people? Are you Indigenous yourself? And are you doing work in your community? So, for me, it's the latter. So, if I think about my PhD work, for instance, I was a participant in the program that I ended up evaluating because I knew that they needed evidence in order to leverage funding for the program. So, I ended up doing that research. So, the work I've done on diabetes, it's the community who asked me to do that work. The work on Métis Mental Health, that was a need that came out of a meeting we went to. So, this is where the Indigenous research has come from. I can't see myself doing anything else but that. But it's because of who I am and my own experiences.

Jacquie Kundoqk Green

When I asked Jacquie Kundoqk Green, a Haisla researcher and Director of the School of Social Work of the University of Victoria, what brought her to do Indigenous research, she answered that this journey started during her studies:

Your first question, it's quite interesting; I guess it wasn't something that I originally sought out to do. I didn't ever imagine that I would be a faculty member, let alone the Director of the School of Social Work, and never in my in my wildest dreams did I ever think that this is something that I would want to take on, or even think that I would qualify for something of this magnitude because for me university is the ivory tower; it's in a place where there are professors and knowledge and you just learn from them. I guess my interest peaked as I was doing my own studies. So, when I started college, and then I moved on to university, I guess it was during those years where I had a lot of questions because of what I was learning. So, for example, I was at the college in Terrace (BC) and there was an anthropology course on the "Northwest Coast Indians"; that was the language they used at the time. So of course, I was interested in it. But the course had nothing to do with Northwest Coast Aboriginal people, it was all about the Coast Salish people on Vancouver Island. ... However, what that did for me is that I had a lot of questions for my parents, for my mom and my dad, and, asked about the history of our territory, asked about our clan system, "did we always have the Indian Act?" I guess, for me, it sparked the interest in me to learn how we governed ourselves prior to the Indian Act.

Subsequently, when Green went into social work, her journey to Indigenous research became linked to finding cultural relevancy and connecting her studies to her identity as a Haisla woman:

And then, of course, going into social work, there was nothing really relevant for Indigenous social work practice that I felt would benefit Indigenous children and families. So again, it was coming back to my parents, my aunts, my uncles, and my colleagues, my peers, we just started having conversations. ... So, I guess what sparked my interest was that I wasn't satisfied with the education I was receiving in the mainstream university. So, my research began as a student, where I started asking questions and talking about relevancy, "Would this apply to our people?"

What is noteworthy from Green's research journey is the back and forth between the individual and the collective. In her research, she always considers her family and her community and seeks to include the voices of Indigenous peoples:

And so, I think that's what informed me, that we need to be better at bringing the voices of people forward and having their voices and their knowledge guide us. I'm thinking as an academic, it really started from there. I guess I never considered myself an academic or a researcher until I got invited to apply for a sessional teaching position. And that was the first time that I really had to consider myself as a teacher at a university, and then I really paid attention to what I brought forward to the classroom, what materials I'm utilizing to teach. What stories do I want the students to know? So, it was really necessary to keep the curriculum relevant, to keep the dialogue relevant, and ask students, particularly non-Indigenous students, to critically analyze what they're learning at university and to pay attention to who's telling the story, in the various epistemologies or the various theories, just to pay attention, who are the authors? What are their intentions?

Finally, she retells how she went from teacher to researcher and how she connected Haisla traditional ways of knowing (oolichan fishing) to research:

So anyway, it all started from there for me. Going back to your question, it was around learning in academia, what academia had to offer me, but it also invigorated me to ask more questions around Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous histories, and then recognizing that, that is epistemology, and also recognizing that when my parents or other family members or community members are telling me stories, that's research, that storytelling is a form of research. I asked questions, and they responded by telling me stories. So, I love that part of it. And I think the other part, an important piece around research is experiential learning and knowing. So, around oolichan fishing, for example: it's one thing to read about it and learn about it – that is how I did because I didn't really grow up oolichan fishing myself – but once you get out there, and you're a part of it, that really strengthens the knowledge around it. For me, I linked that to research because that's another form of accessing information and knowledge.

Damien Lee

Damien Lee is an Anishinaabe researcher from Fort William First Nation. He described his entry into academic research as an “accident,” as a by-product of his activism:

To be honest, it was completely by accident. I didn't want to be a researcher; nobody in my whole family had ever gone to post-secondary. I'm the first one to go to university, the first one to get a PhD. ... So, in my case in particular, I can tell you the trajectory of going from not being interested in research to becoming a researcher, if that makes sense. Basically, for a very long time, since I was 14, I was doing activist stage-based work in my First Nation, around environmental issues; we have a lot of, you would call it “environmental racism.” There's a lot of toxic industries being placed next to us. And so, from a very early age, I was active in exploring those issues and making them public and

making them clear and trying to form some sort of action within the community. And to make a long story short, basically, what happened was – there's two things that happened in terms of research. I was doing research without knowing it. We raised money to buy GPS equipment to go and map the actual industrial sites that were next to us and then producing a map, and then distributing that map, and other things too. But the map is a good example. To us, we weren't doing research; to us, we were just taking care of our community. And it wasn't until I took the map and a university professor asked me, "Can you guys come and give a presentation to my class?" And I remember going to the class, a university class in Thunder Bay, and basically saying, "Here's the map." And he was saying, "Well, why are you doing this kind of research?" and we said, "This is not research," and he said, "Well, actually, I think it is."

Lee goes on to explain how his accidental entry into research, led him to choose it as a life path:

And so, that was my first realization. But what happened then around the same time is that my realization about research also became very politicized. Because what happened was, for a very long time, I was working on environmental issues, but I had not considered what colonialism was. And I had not considered the context of colonialism that we were living in. And so, I had an epiphany moment when I read a book, and what happened was, I realized that the environmental issues that we were working on, and that I was working on, were really a manifestation of colonialism. And so, I switched gears completely and set my sight on colonialism, around the same moment that I was becoming conscious of the fact that I was doing research and the value of research. So, those two things really coalesced at the same moment in my trajectory.

Gladys Rowe

Cree researcher Gladys Rowe shared how social work led her to becoming a researcher:

I love the first question, “How did you get to this space?” It invites so many different reflections on my own journey, and I’ve been doing a lot of that in terms of just finishing my PhD and thinking about the really long road that that required and through all of the times of being in the university. I’ve been a student for pretty much all of my adult life. I took the longest road possible through all of my degrees. I actually went to university right out of high school, pretty much failed my first year of university, decided to go to a college, and after my time at that college, realized that, well, maybe I do need an undergraduate degree. ... So, my foray into research began because I was practicing as a social worker. And I felt helpless. I felt stuck. I felt like there were so many challenges that people were experiencing that were much broader than the individual level of, “Here’s some bus tickets,” “Here’s some resources.” I started to see the larger structural oppressions, the systemic oppressions that were impacting people’s lives every single day, and wondered if that was an opportunity for me to create change at a broader level. And I really didn’t know what that could look like but knew that I myself wasn’t going to be someone who was going to be able to stick around in that type of social work for much longer because it was really, I wasn’t feeling like I was effective at it.

Much like Lee, Rowe discovered almost by chance that she enjoyed research, that it was relevant, and that this was the kind of work she wanted to do:

So, I had an opportunity as I was assessing what is it that I want to do with my life because I’m not sure this is for me; I had an opportunity and was invited by an amazing mentor, Dr. R.E., to come and work on a community-driven research project in Manitoba in the

summer of 2007. ... And so, it was really an exciting opportunity. And I traveled to 13 different First Nations that summer and really listened to the stories of families ... I had an opportunity during that summer to see what is possible with community-driven research and really experience that connection between prioritizing community voice and actually making something broader happen. And it really inspired me. I hadn't thought about research up until that point, really, and I thought, okay, well, how can I do this? What do I need to do this? And so, I applied for a master's in social work.

Finally, as an emergent scholar, Rowe found the support of an Indigenous mentor, and this confirmed that Indigenous research, with its focus on “stories,” was the right path for her:

So, my journey into research really came to be because I was looking for something to affect change at a broader level. And I was really inspired by the opportunity to connect with Dr. Michael Hart, and so many other Indigenous scholars that were at the University of Manitoba at that time. And in those connections, I became quickly involved in a lot of community work and was invited into so many different opportunities to expand into this area of Indigenous research. ... And in a way, that feels meant to be. You asked, why research versus poetry or arts or all these other opportunities for Indigenous resurgence, and I think, in my PhD, I do a lot of arts-based work. And so in my PhD, I really worked to marry that interdisciplinary aspect because in my master's, I started to see the possibilities of how to incorporate story and film and poetry as a mechanism for gathering stories and then also telling stories within research, and so “stories” is what really fascinates me, and I think that I see research as one way to be able to gather and share stories in a way that can effect change at a broader level.

Debby Wilson Danard.

Debby Wilson Danard is an Anishinaabe scholar and knowledge keeper. She explained how her journey to research began as an educator in a First Nation community and, like Rowe, she wanted to have an impact at a broader level than the classroom:

I wanted to be a teacher in public school. So, I took an Aboriginal teacher education program, but then I found out that I could only teach on reserve with that diploma. So, at that time, I lived in Toronto, so one of my friends was like, “you should apply for university and then you can get a Bachelor of Education.” I got accepted to U of T, and I finished my BA. But I only took the courses that were of interest to me, which were Aboriginal Studies and Visual Studies. I didn’t have a grand idea at that time. There was a point when I was in my teaching practice, I was in Lac Lacroix in Northwestern Ontario, I was doing my teaching practicum there, ... and we had “Aboriginal Awareness Week” on the week I was there, and I’m like, “shouldn’t every day be Aboriginal Awareness Day?” So, I think part of it, if anything, I was like, well, maybe I need to go higher up to teach the teachers ... So, I finished my B.Ed. ... I can’t remember why I did my master’s, I think because even with a B.Ed., you can’t teach the teachers, you have to have an M.Ed. to teach the teachers, so I was like, “it’s only two years.”

Wilson Danard’s master’s led her to do a PhD, but this time in an area much closer to traditional Indigenous knowledge, even if, as she explains, her own knowledge base was not recognized:

While I was doing my master’s, I had this whole idea of “Life Promotion Suicide” ... this got me on this path of looking at traditional knowledge as a protective factor for life. So, my whole thesis is on that intersection of traditional knowledge approaches to what’s currently used, and my research was almost ethno-narrative in a way because, as I was

writing, I was also working as a suicide prevention coach in Ontario, which was an interesting intersection. ... So, my PhD is in social justice education. So, it's been challenging to talk about "Life Promotion" and engage in mental health because I'm not a social worker, and I'm also not a psychologist or a clinical person. So, it's been challenging for me because I don't think that my credentials as an Anishinaabe Knowledge Keeper are enough. It is enough knowledge for me to engage in that topic, but the world that I live in tells me "No" because I'm not a social worker, because I'm not a clinician, and suicide belongs to that world.

Sandra Deer

Mohawk education researcher and teacher Sandra Deer shared how her journey into Indigenous research was deeply tied to her Indigenous identity and connected to her passion for her culture and traditions:

When I read the question, "What led me on this path to Indigenous research?" my answer was going to be that what led me on a path of Indigenous research was, for me, it was that, I was just led on the path of conducting research in what interested me. And I wasn't seeking to conduct "Indigenous research." The research I conducted is Indigenous because I'm Indigenous, and this is why it is Indigenous research because I'm a Kanien'kehà:ka woman, and the history of my culture and how those practices benefit us now, in this world that we live. ... So, for me, my whole life, I've always had a fascination with my culture, stemming all the way from when I was a little child, with all the stories and things that I pulled in during a ceremony. I'm sitting and listening. I was always fascinated with, "Where are those words going when they're speaking?" "Who are they actually speaking to?" You're sitting there as a child watching, listening, "Who are they

actually speaking to?” Questions would always go through my head when I was little. And I found that was always a fascination with me. And I guess over the years growing up, and then going to school myself, I was just always drawn to anything that, if a teacher said something about stories, or anything about our culture, my eyes lit up, I tuned in; when it was math, I wasn’t tuned in. ... So, I don’t really know if I answered the question, but I would say that what led me on the path was my own desire and my own passion about my own culture. And because I’m an Indigenous woman, I can do Indigenous research, and that’s where it all stems from, right? This is who I am. So, my research will be Indigenous, regardless of the framework that I choose, because my ideas and my philosophies and my belief systems are what carries me through this research.

Theme One: Relationships

Subtheme One: Relationships and Indigenous Knowledge

In my conversations with Indigenous scholars, the topic of relationships came up on numerous occasions. The epistemological principle of “relationality” is the backbone of Indigenous research, and it can be summed up in the statement “everything is related.” In this way, people, animals, and their whole ecologies are intrinsically interconnected as “part of a large extended ecological family that shares ancestry and origin” (Salmon, 2012, p. 21). This postulation plays a central role in the way *one comes to know* within an Indigenous knowledge system. Knowledge is embodied, “transmitted,” and updated through the relationships that take place at the different levels of this extended interwoven network: “Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is highly localized, and it is social. Its focus is the web of relationships between humans, animals, plants, natural forces, spirits, and landforms, in a particular locality, as opposed to the discovery of universal laws” (Battiste, 2000, p. 44.). Accordingly, all the scholars I spoke to considered that

this principle should be the beacon of light guiding all researchers who want to conduct Indigenous research and that one should see it manifested at every step of the research process.

Given the importance of relationships, this thematic analysis will explore this multifaceted topic from several angles. At first level, epistemology, the importance of relationships in the Indigenous conception of knowledge creation, embodiment, and transmission is discussed. Second, at a deeper level, knowledge diffusion underlies the relationship that exists between people and knowledge *itself*. The relationship to knowledge will be discussed in itself: in how it is connected to language, land, and community. Third, from epistemology, we move naturally into methodology, as knowing leads to doing. Methodologically, relationships are crucial in establishing genuine research partnerships with Indigenous communities and within research teams made up of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. Lastly, this theme also includes a reflection on the dire effects of dysfunctional relationality and on the consequence for research of a total lack of a relationship with Indigenous knowledge and with Indigenous partners.

Relationships and Gaining Access to Knowledge.

Cajete (2000) explains that within an Indigenous worldview, learning and knowing can come through being in relationship with anything in the universe; anything can potentially serve as a teacher:

When you deal with Indigenous science, you begin to realize that everything is alive. Everything, including a stone, can talk to you. Everything can teach you something. Everything is alive, related, and connected in the dynamic interactive and reciprocal relationships of nature. (p. 190)

In our conversation, Lee explained that this personal reciprocal relationship found in nature must also be present in research between the “knowledge seeker” and the “knowledge holder,” and this relationship must be the basis of Indigenous knowledge creation:

So, from an Anishinaabe point of view on what is valid knowledge production, I would say that the relationship is really key. And what is key about it is that the knowledge seeker spends the time with the knowledge holder to learn and understand, and then more, and just as importantly, to be given the authority, the right to share that.

Here, Lee emphasized that Indigenous knowledge creation depends on long-term relationships. What this also means is that “knowledge” is not readily made available to anyone who is just superficially interested. Knowledge is often safeguarded by a series of conditions set by the knowledge holder to make sure that the knowledge seeker is sincere. The learning process therefore takes time, and authority is not easily conferred. Within many Indigenous cultures, certain types of knowledge are conceptualized as being sacred. These can be songs, prayers, or stories, and they are usually sung or told only in certain circumstances. As in many spiritual traditions across the world, there are many ways to preserve and protect sacred knowledge. Therefore, the relationship between the knowledge holder and the knowledge seeker may serve to *limit* access to this knowledge and protect it from distortion and wrong appropriation. The kind of relationship described by Lee therefore serves to limit the number of people who have the authority to share such knowledge. In his book *The World We Used to Live in: Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men*, V. Deloria Jr. (2006) spoke at length of the importance in North American Indigenous cultures of keeping sacred knowledge secret. Paradoxically, as V. Deloria explains (2006), many western researchers did not understand this principle and deliberately insisted on hearing the visions and dreams of Medicine Men, which negatively impacted their informants:

The old medicine men were apparently instructed not to reveal the whole content of their visions since that would render them secular knowledge and they would lose their powers. ... when he finally relented and told her [the researcher] his vision, she commented: “Sika ‘ka was deeply affected by the narration of his dreams” but just as surely, she knew that in revealing everything in his dream, the old man was bringing his life to a close, his task completed, since the vision had become common property. Many times, the thoughtless scholar is the cause of great tragedy among Indians. (p. 212)

In a similar way, Lee explained how from an Anishinaabe point of view, only a limited number of people are empowered to teach Anishinaabe knowledge, and this serves as a protective mechanism:

I know Elders who are well into their 70s, and who have not been given the authority yet by their teachers, because they don't have it right yet. ... One of the outcomes, in my mind about this Anishinaabe approach, is that in most cases, you're not going to have the authority to share the knowledge because it's so heavy and so specific and so deep; you might get authority to share some piece of knowledge, so that alone precludes a number of people from being able to teach something about Anishinaabe knowledge.

To illustrate the important of relationships in this transmission of knowledge, Wilson Danard gave a concrete example of how this principle of relationality operates in water ceremonies. In her experience, the use of water, as a traditional teaching method, is as much verbal as it is experiential. This method essentially lies in creating a relationship between the person and the water to facilitate the direct reception of teachings from the water:

The water is a teaching tool ... Whatever is happening to you over there when I am speaking for the water and you are holding your own vessel of water, and what you are

thinking and what is connecting, I cannot teach that; it's your experience, and whatever that experience is, I am just guiding this narrative for you to have that experience.

Wilson Danard also explained how it is the *personal relationship* that limits the possibility of appropriation. She always warns her students when she is conducting a ceremony that she is not *giving* it to them. She is facilitating the learning, but she is not conferring upon them the “authority” to lead the ceremony themselves:

I do a full moon ceremony with people, but that does not mean I am giving them the ceremony. And I tried to say to people in that moment, “I am going to share this water ceremony with you” ... But then I tell them, “I am not giving it to you,” and I am hoping that they won't be like, “Oh yeah, I went to this cool water ceremony and now I am going to do a water ceremony.”

This question of authority and of “who owns Indigenous knowledge” is central because in research, authority and authorship are what make someone an “expert.” But the principle of relationality implies that an Elder's sharing of one story or one song with a person does constitute a long-standing relationship, and it certainly does not make someone an expert of Indigenous knowledge, nor does it give that person ownership of that story. Researchers trained in western knowledge acquisition might see a problem with these limits set on their authorial knowledge. For Lee this constitutes a deep clash of worldviews regarding how knowledge is conceptualized and how it is seen to be produced and shared:

So, part of that clash then is, and there's a lot of confusion in this kind of neoliberal approach to knowledge production, where “I should have the right to teach this knowledge in a way that I see is aligned with what's written and published already.” But then, is it appropriate? Because they may or may not have the authority given to share it in the

appropriate ways. And can you solve that at university? No, I don't think so...there are limitations about what can be taught in university because of the way that Anishinaabe knowledge systems are designed, not everybody has the authority.

These issues with authorship and knowledge production can be resolved, according to Rowe, by acknowledging the source of knowledge, by recognizing that relationship, and by having consistent relational “*explicitness*” and centring. Thus, reader(s) know exactly under what circumstances and within which relationship this knowledge was acquired and who gave the authority to share such knowledge. This is the concept of “ethical accountability,” which Rowe identified as being central to Indigenous research:

I think for me, it's a matter of the explicitness and the connection of the relations and the relational and ethical accountability that's made, that's written, that's shared, and that's documented in the work.

In sum, relational accountability must occur on different levels: in relation to knowledge holders but also, according to Wilson, in relation to Indigenous knowledge itself. The next subtheme will include a discussion of the notion that within an Indigenous relational worldview, a central relationship to Indigenous knowledge must be established for knowing to be even possible.

Relationship to Indigenous Knowledge.

This next section, which is the most abstract in this theme, should begin with a cautionary remark. Wilson, who has been writing and talking about this topic for decades, states that one's relationship with Indigenous knowledge as a precursor to Indigenous learning is the most difficult thing to grasp:

Everything that is, our cosmos, our view of the very nature of reality, everything is *relationship*. ... This is probably the hardest concept for most people to grasp if they

haven't grown up just knowing this innately to begin with, and it's incredibly hard to teach anyone because it's something that you have to live, and then once you live it for a long time, then you recognize it, and it makes sense. (Wilson in Coburn, 2021)

In my case, to grasp these ideas, I reflected on my own lived experiences among the Wixárika (Huichol) people. This helped me somewhat to understand these concepts. I am not sure how much it will allow me, in turn, to explain them, but I do my best here.

According to Wilson, within an Indigenous ontology, relationships are *reality*. This means that the relationships between things surpass in importance the connected things themselves. If we translate this principle into the realm of Indigenous research, this implies that the relationship with Indigenous knowledge is more important than the knowledge itself. Furthermore, this relationship dictates ethical behaviour toward knowledge. Certain principles, such as respect and reciprocity, must be followed in one's relationship to knowledge and in its use in research (Wilson in Coburn, 2021).

In our conversation, Wilson discussed at length how the most important relationship of an Indigenous researcher is with Indigenous knowledge. This includes traditional ecological knowledge or "Indigenous science," as the systematic observation of nature and empirical experimentation over generations (Castellano, 2004). This relationship also includes intuitive, revealed knowledge. Both these forms of knowing are relational because they are based on seen and unseen connections to land and to spirit:

Couture (1991) makes reference to the congruence between *inner* and *outer* reality: reality is experienced by entering deeply into the inner being of the mind, and not by attempting to break through the outer world to a beyond. This positions the Native person in "communion" with the living reality of all things. His "communion" is his experience of

the ideas within, concentric with reality without. Thus, to “know,” to cognize, is experiential, direct knowing. (Castellano, 2000, p. 28)

Therefore, both outer and inner Indigenous ways of knowing follow relationality as their guiding principle, as these are not separate spheres of knowing but unite and complete each other seamlessly. Moreover, as the basis of reality is relational, one is in relationship not only with people, places, and objects, but also with immaterial things like ideas and concepts. Wilson suggests that research is nothing other than engaging and deepening that essential relationship with ideas, with knowledge. And as knowledge enters a relationship with us, it ceases to be inert, according to Wilson, but gains agency and responds to us through that relationship. Wilson thus explains that sentience is an intrinsic quality of all things in a living, relating universe: “we are engaged with a *living* universe, and that extends to say that knowledge itself also has that *sentience* because we have imbued it with life through engaging in relationship with it” (Wilson in Coburn, 2021).

Wilson also stated, in our conversation, that this view of knowledge as intrinsically alive may be the biggest difference between an Indigenous worldview and a western worldview. Within a western worldview, we have agreed that certain things are inert, passive, and dead. These objects, like rocks, do not feel, think, or have agency. Other things, like animals, have sentience but only partial agency. This hierarchical view of life establishes that certain things can learn, think, and feel at relative levels, while others cannot, but all their thinking and feeling capacities fall far below those of humans; so, for the most part, we treat everything else like objects. This is why it is so hard for westerners to understand the Indigenous perspective on knowing and learning, in which *everything* is a potential teacher. Furthermore, this relational view of knowledge as having agency also means that one cannot “own” Indigenous knowledge or “claim” it because it is not a thing to

be claimed. In the same way as when one is in a personal relationship, Wilson explains, there must be respect and regard for knowledge:

So, you're not going to try and *own* other people when you enter into a relationship with them. But you also shouldn't be doing that when you are entering into a relationship *with* the land and when you are entering in a relationship *with* knowledge. Each of those things should maintain its own *sovereignty* as well. I guess part of sovereignty is having agency. So, knowledge itself, Indigenous knowledge, has agency. (Wilson in Coburn, 2021).

Moreover, this *personal* relationship with knowledge directly impacts the moral and ethical conduct of a person, as they will have to consider how they *use* knowledge from the perspective of a reciprocal relationship. Earlier, Lee discussed how authority in Indigenous knowledge systems is usually conferred by Elders, but what Wilson adds to this is that the responsibility toward knowledge stems not only from the relationship to community but also stems from a relationship to knowledge:

I think that one of the bigger distinctions between Indigenous research and western research is viewing what knowledge itself is ... If you start to approach research with an understanding that knowledge itself has agency, so if you think of knowledge as a discrete living entity and you're trying to build a relationship with that knowledge, with Knowledge with a capital K, so this is an entity that has agency, you have to sort of be conscious of, so, "if I'm building a relationship with this other person, they tell me something in confidence," you build that personal relationship. So, you get to know that person well enough to know, "yes, they'd be happy for me to share that" ... So, you have to start to think of knowledge that way as well. And just because someone shares knowledge with you,

doesn't mean that they are giving you permission to use that Knowledge in the same way that they would use it.

So, the transmission of knowledge from an Indigenous perspective happens via several relationships: it happens between the knowledge holder and the knowledge seeker as people, but prior to that, a relationship must exist between the knowledge holder and knowledge. Thus, knowledge is not an inert thing that gets passed around but a living entity that chooses to make itself known. One example of this that could help ground this concept of the agency of knowledge is how shamanism works.

In the Wixárika tradition, shaman apprentices are initiated very progressively over twelve years. Knowledge is learned in layers through experiences, initiations, and songs. Most of this learning happens during ceremonies and rituals. These contain and enact in a concrete, embodied way the metaphysical knowledge of their tradition. Ceremonies also re-enact the core relationships that people have with the deities and with the ancestors. So, the twelve-year journey of apprenticeship can be seen as the time during which the relationship between the teacher and apprentice is established, but it can also be seen as the time it takes for the apprentice to develop a relationship with the songs, the rituals, and everything that comprises knowledge in this tradition. This key relationship with knowledge is what comes to differentiate great shamans and great healers as powerful leaders. It is not so much *who* was their teacher but what they were able to accomplish and attain themselves through the teachings of their tradition. Therefore, it is the close relationship with knowledge itself that enables them to surpass other healers.

Wilson grounded his own explanation of this relationship by anthropomorphizing knowledge and using the analogy of intimate personal relationships to illuminate the nature of the reciprocal relationship between an Indigenous researcher and Knowledge.

It's almost like if I introduce you to my wife. I'm in a relationship with my wife, but introducing you to her, it doesn't mean that she is your wife now too. It means that you have a different relationship with her. So, I have this relationship with Knowledge, and I have things that I share with Knowledge; if I introduce you to this Knowledge, it doesn't mean that you have to be in the same relationship with it. But like if you know my wife, then you can talk with her and you can sort of, she'll share some stories with you that you can use, but it's not like you have the same level of a relationship with her. I think that if we start to think of Knowledge in that way, then it sort of redefines what's going to be private, and what's going to be open for sharing. Just because I share something with you doesn't mean that I'm giving you permission to use that Knowledge. But that Knowledge may inform how you think about things; you do not necessarily need to repeat it. Or sometimes I'll give you explicit permission, say, "this is really cool, you should use this and go forward and use it yourself."

This analogy can serve as a guideline for researchers, as it clarifies how one comes to know what is appropriate to include in research and what should be left out. As Wilson explains, the act of determining what is the appropriate use of knowledge is done through behaving in a principled way:

If we put those same principles of how we want to behave with other people into how we behave with knowledge itself, it really changes the way we start to think about things like doing research and how we start to think about what we're doing with knowledge. (Wilson in Coburn, 2021)

Lastly, having this relationship with Indigenous knowledge becomes a prerequisite to conducting Indigenous research. For Wilson, this is obviously the case, but Lavallee also emphasized this by saying that one must “have” certain teachings to be able to do research:

When it comes to Indigenous knowledges, it's based on our teachings. If you don't have the teachings, and you're saying you're using an 'Indigenous research framework' or an 'Indigenous methodology,' you actually can't do it. Because you have to have the teachings.

The need to “have” that inner connection, that relationship to knowledge, is also emphasized by Absolon (2011) in her own explanation of the role that Indigenous knowledge plays in Indigenous research (p. 12):

Indigenous re-search is often guided by the Knowledge found within. Aboriginal epistemology (the ways of knowing our realities) honours our inner being as the place where Spirit lives, our dreams reside and our hearts beats. Indigenous peoples have processes to tap into this inner space and to make the unknown – know. (Ermine, 1995 cited in Absolon, 2011, p. 12)

The nature and the depth of this relationship to knowledge is also strongly interconnected with and dependent on three other fundamental relationships: to language, to land, and to community through ceremony.

Relationships to Language, Land, and Ceremony.

Language.

Indigenous languages are the doorway to Indigenous worldviews and ways of knowing because the relational nature of reality is embedded in the words themselves. Wilson explains how the structure of a language corresponds to this vision of reality:

It's really interesting when you start to think about the way our different languages work. That word *nukum* means grandmother; there's the word for grandmother, but that means "my grandmother"; you would call her *Kukum*, which means "your grandmother." She can't be a grandmother without being a grandmother to someone; you have to *name* that relationship in that way. (Wilson in Coburn, 2021)

Furthermore, for Indigenous people who did not grow up in their cultures, re-learning their forgotten or long-forbidden languages is a way of "going home" and of reconnecting with knowledge. Ojibway author Richard Wagamese (2008) retells eloquently and poignantly the deep meaning that learning Ojibway as an adult had for him:

I was twenty-four when the first Ojibway word rolled off my tongue ... When I spoke that word aloud, I felt as if I had truly spoken for the first time. That first word opened the door to my culture. When I spoke it, I stepped over the threshold into a new way of understanding myself and my place in the world. ... I felt awkward speaking Ojibway at first. There is a softness to the language that is off-putting when you first begin. It's almost as if timelessness had a vocabulary. ... I had the sensation I was speaking a language that had existed for longer than any the world had ever known. The feeling of Ojibway in my throat was permanence. ... *Peendigean*. Come in. With that one word, I walked fully into the world of my people. (p. 137–138)

Mi'kmaq scholar Marie Battiste (2000) explains the importance of relationality and knowledge in her own language:

The Mi'kmaw language is more than just a knowledge base, it is essential for the survival of the Mi'kmaq. It reflects the Mi'kmaq philosophy of how we shall live with one another,

how we shall treat each other, and how the world fits together ... Mi'kmaw language resonates with relations and relationships are important to our survival. (p. 50)

Rowe further developed the notion that there is an intrinsic connection between language and knowledge when she talks about reconnecting to Indigenous ways of knowing through reconnecting to Indigenous language. This is important because colonialism badly damaged and almost entirely severed the relationship to language and, therefore, to knowledge. That damage was done mainly through forceful removal from land, forced re-settlement, and educational assimilation policies aimed at stopping language transmission. When language is lost, access to knowledge becomes reduced and fragmented and people are weakened. Rowe shared her own experience of losing her language:

I thought about the diverse experiences as Indigenous peoples across Canada that we've had with language and the disconnection and the shame that occurred, even just a generation ago, about transmission of language and sharing language. Within my family, I wasn't taught Cree when I was a child. My great granny Gladys Moose, who I am named after, she was a fluent Cree speaker, and she chose not to teach Cree to her children and grandchildren because it was shameful, and she thought that people in her family would do better if they only spoke English.

Many Indigenous scholars are part of the communities that have made great efforts to revitalize their languages and, by extension, their relationships to knowledge. Deer shared her personal relationship with the Mohawk language as a speaker and how it is connected to Indigenous knowledge:

And if you are speaking about ceremony, legends, stories in the language, when you are speaking in Mohawk, it's one of the most beautiful things you could hear, especially if you

understand it. Because once you translate it, it does not have the same power ... the language has a lot of nature in it, it's very close, it has a personal meaning, it's a very close personal thing to know your language and be able to speak it well.

Therefore, the integration of Indigenous language in research is pivotal in rebuilding a relationship with Indigenous knowledge. As Rowe explained, rehabilitating language and giving it a privileged place in research, as a way to give form to Indigenous epistemologies, is a powerful way to reclaim a relationship to language and knowledge:

Needless to say, I do purposely work to include concepts and processes in particular, when I'm thinking about meaning making or sense making analysis in the research, and what Swampy Cree terms relate to that process – to try and really deepen my understanding and deepen my explanation of what it means to make meaning of stories and knowledge that's gathered in a way that's really rooted in Swampy Cree epistemology and ontology.

What is delicate about the language question is that, nowadays, seldom are these languages learned *in situ*, on the territories and within the communities where they were once spoken. Many of these languages have been removed and uprooted to educational institutions. This decontextualization breaks the vital relationships between land, language, and knowledge by compartmentalizing each component and isolating them from each other when, in fact, they are part of the same complex living entity, “knowledge.”

Lavallee talked about an Indigenous renaissance, but she also mentioned the difficulties that exist in restoring the connection between land and language:

So, one of the things that a lot of people are doing now is trying to go back to their language. Indigenous Resurgence is about going back to the land, learning our languages, our languages that emanate from who we are. I think that people who are using Indigenous

language, need to be Indigenous. I just feel, because something's happening right now where ... our languages were removed through education, residential school, the educational system removed our languages, forbid people to speak Indigenous language, and now, where are we learning our Indigenous languages and paying for it? In universities. So, I think that is something we really need to look at and have our languages be learned from the land. That's how we learn our language, is on the land. We don't learn our language in the academy.

Lastly, Lavallee shared a concrete example of awkward language re-appropriation by an institution and how Indigenous people reacted negatively. This supported the point she made earlier that it should be Indigenous people reclaiming Indigenous languages, not non-Indigenous people and institutions:

So, sometimes now when I'm doing certain work, I will think about the language because there are certain words where, if you say them in the language, there's an understanding of what it means. And when you translate it, it doesn't translate right. But when you say it, people will know. An example of this, and it wasn't research necessarily, but Ryerson did something with a taskforce and they gave it a Cree name. We got calls from across Canada, like individual Indigenous folks saying, why is Ryerson using a Cree name? We're not on Cree territory. We have a Cree Elder and that's why we have that name, but it was not Anishinaabemowin or Honoshone. So, I think it's important for us to bring the languages in. I think we have to be very careful in how we do that. I think there is space for Indigenous peoples to do that because we have to reclaim our language. Our language should not be reclaimed by non-Indigenous people.

As with languages, Indigenous people were dispossessed of their land, which severely damaged their relationship to knowledge.

Land.

For these Indigenous scholars, land and language are part of the same relationship to Indigenous knowledge. Wilson explains how the relationship between these three elements can be understood like an equilateral triangle, with land, community, and knowledge working together as a unit (Figure 6): “Knowledge is something that is in this relationship; it comes from the land, in relationship with the land and also, it’s in relationship with our communities” (Wilson in Coburn, 2021).

Figure 6

The Land, Community, and Knowledge (image from Coburn, 2021)



Lavallee also emphasized this connection to the land and explained how this is precisely what makes Indigenous knowledge so diverse and localized:

Our Indigenous knowledges come from the land; all the land that we're from is slightly different. So, our knowledges are different. So, there can't be a pan-Indigenous approach, generally. The Medicine Wheel is a pan teaching, but even within that, you go further out west, the color changes, the teachings change, depending on who you talk to.

Consequently, land or the local ecological context of a community is the “living context” of knowledge (Figure 6). So, when we say that Indigenous epistemologies across Indigenous cultures share common principles, the way to avoid falling into pan-Indigenous generalizations is by keeping in mind that each system is place-based and is grounded “within a living context” (Wilson in Coburn, 2021). Wilson explained the importance of understanding this principle when conducting Indigenous research in the following terms:

Understanding the local context: I think that that's how the land makes itself known is through the local context. I think all Indigenous research should be principle based, so based on principles of relational accountability, based on respect and reciprocity. So those principles are everywhere. But it's the local land-based context that says how you apply those principles.

Wilson was also suggesting that certain knowledge is valid only within a specific context and should not be uprooted from that context. For example, traditional ecological knowledge about plants is highly localized; it includes the use of plants, their properties, and possibly a relationship to the plant spirits. This localized knowledge emerged out of the interaction between a specific people and their environment, so it did not create universal laws that can be applied to all plants everywhere. There is an intrinsic connection between land and knowledge, so this relationship with land is part of the relationship with knowledge. That is where the importance of learning *in situ* comes from; it is about learning in a grounded, experiential way and not in an abstract way.

Again, this is one of the major differences between western ways of learning and understanding knowledge and the Indigenous way of learning and relating to knowledge: western ways have erased the context out which knowledge initially emerged:

So, a lot of western knowledge tends to be decontextualized; in that sense, we can have individual knowledge, and then, knowledge gets passed around through or built by an individual doing research. That research informs our systems and institutions and informs our ways of education. And that's how it gets back to individuals, but it becomes decontextualized because it's no longer looking at a community system or it's been deleted from the land, from the land that it should be coming from. (Wilson in Coburn, 2021)

The third element of the triangle is community. Both Lavallee and Wilson explained that the relationship to knowledge is dependent on the connection to community, and the relationship to community is cultivated through ceremonies.

Ceremony and Community.

Ceremonies are a known vector for knowledge transmission because they are experiential and embodied ways of learning and knowing. As communal gatherings, ceremonies also implicitly validate membership to a group and affirm that knowledge is relational and communal. Indeed, Wilson makes this point clear by saying that “Knowledge is *relational*, we hold it in relationship, as individuals, but we *don't own it*. So, we are in a relationship with Knowledge as a community of people, rather than as individuals” (Wilson in Coburn, 2021).

Moreover, ceremonies are anchored in time and place, so they limit access to knowledge comparatively to published books, which can theoretically be read by anyone, at any time, in any place. Attending ceremonies and actively participating in such events often requires an invitation

and a certain level of skill. Lavallee explained how this experiential component of ceremonies is at the core of Indigenous knowledge:

Michael Hart wrote about “Indigenous knowledges in the Teepee”: When you go to the Sweat Lodge and how the Sweat Lodge is made, everything that you do is based on traditional knowledge; you don’t know that knowledge unless you actually do it.

Moreover, as with the example of the Wixárika shaman, ceremonies are important because they constitute the necessary “training” to enter and deepens a person’s relationship with knowledge. Ceremonies teach participants, in an experiential way, the difference between sacred or secret knowledge and public knowledge. Ceremonies instill a sense of sacredness around knowledge, which protects it and keeps people from repeating and sharing unnecessarily. Wilson explained the connection between ceremonies and doing research:

I think western people have a hard time sort of differentiating that just because they have information, doesn’t mean that they’re necessarily allowed to use it, or they can utilize it but that doesn’t mean they’re necessarily allowed to repeat it, or that they’re given full access to it. And I think that’s part of what you get trained in when you get training in doing ceremonies; you get to know where your boundaries are. I’ve been to this ceremony; that doesn’t necessarily mean I’m going to be able to lead that ceremony. Or I’ve been told that I can lead this ceremony, so, you have to start doing it. It doesn’t mean that you’re good at it yet; you have to do it a few times and then get good at it.

In the preceding section, a person’s relationship with Indigenous knowledge was presented as central and necessary to conducting Indigenous research. Now, from the concept of “knowing,” we move on to the concept of “doing.” The next section discusses the praxis of the principle of relationality in Indigenous methodologies. It describes the importance of genuine research

partnerships with community members and within research teams, and it also discusses the negative impacts of skewed, missing relationships.

Subtheme Two: Relationships as Key in Indigenous Methodologies

Research Relationships.

Methodology, in qualitative research, is where the most obvious level of relationality takes place. Relationships are necessary to collect data; these often take the form of conversations between researchers and participants during interviews or focus groups. Brinkmann (2018) explains how these common methods signal the fundamental role of relationships in the production of knowledge in research:

Our reality is a conversational reality, and the conversation is a fundamental mode of human relationship. ... The idea that humankind is a kind of enacted conversation gives the interview a central position in producing knowledge about the conversational world. (p. 1007)

Researchers agree that good qualitative research relies on having good relationships with research participants so that they feel sufficiently at ease to share valuable information. Brinkmann (2018) points out that the typical research relationship is often skewed and based on inequality. He argues that within the interview, disparity has become “naturalized” and is taken for granted:

The relationship of an interview involves a specific “field of communicability,” that is, a social construction of communicative processes, which is a product of cultural-historical practices that enables different roles, positions, relations, and forms of agency that are too frequently taken for granted. Much about this field of communicability may seem trivial for qualitative researchers – that the interviewer asks questions and the interviewee answers, that the interviewee conveys personal information that he or she would not

normally tell a stranger, that the interviewee is positioned as the expert on that person's own life and so on – but this field of communicability is not often addressed by interview researchers when reflecting upon the process of knowledge production. (p. 1008)

What distinguishes research relationships within an Indigenous methodology is precisely that they are, ideally, built on trust, respect, and reciprocity, the guiding principles of Indigenous research. Furthermore, these principles consciously aim to undermine the colonizing tendencies that are prevalent in standard western research relationships (Smith, 1999).

For Lee, it is in research collaborations that the *clash* between an Indigenous and a western conception of research relationships is most apparent. Indeed, some collaborations do not work because the people involved have completely different value systems, beliefs, and ways of being in the world. Lee illustrated how some research partnerships can be damaging from the outset because of a lack of awareness of the importance of relationality:

We were trying to collaborate with foresters because what we wanted to do was manage the forest in a way to have this maple syrup operation. So, we wanted to create a partnership. So, we reached out to the local university. I'm speaking here as a community member, but also at the time, I was doing my PhD and was very aware of the politics that we are talking about. But I wasn't engaging in this relationship researcher to researcher; I was engaging as a partner, as a community-based person, but as a person with that training, I could speak the language of methodology. So, we invited these foresters to come to the bush. And the point was to take an initial look with their students to say if we could do a project together that was beneficial to both. And so, we set the date, we went to meet the people where we were supposed to meet, which is outside the bush. And the professors got impatient waiting for us, not because we were late, but they just got there before us.

So, we went up to the bush. And by the time we got there, they were already doing the work. And we showed up and I was like, “This wasn’t the point. We were not bringing you here today to do the work. We were coming here to begin a relationship; to see if one was possible. And the relationship is the most important thing.” And then the prof said to me, “Well, we can do that next; that can be the next thing.” I was like, “no, that’s the very first thing. Nothing happens without that.” And it was awkward and embarrassing for them. And they never came back. So, ultimately, we didn’t get what we wanted out of it, and neither did they. So, in terms of collaboration, there is the tokenism, and then there is this lack of, I would say, lack of sense of positionality and lack of sense of the context of colonialism that were operating, and it often leads to, not just full pause, but often to damage.

All the Indigenous scholars with whom I spoke were adamant that genuine relationships with community members must translate to the principle of relationality on the field, as it is enunciated in Indigenous epistemologies. There must be a coherence between the worldview of the people who are participating in the research and the methods for gathering information. A further difficulty arises when institutions do not consider relationship building an essential part of doing research. Indeed, most granting agencies do not fund relationship building because it precedes the actual research and might seem an unproductive way of spending money, although these preliminary encounters ensure good collaborations and good research. Wilson precisely stated that relationship building is an essential part of doing relational research and should be pursued despite not being fully recognized by institutions:

Like an example of this is that one of the projects I’m working on now is looking at Indigenous astronomy, and we spent a whole week in this Indigenous community. We didn’t

talk about astronomy for 10 seconds, except among ourselves. We were just going up there and just hanging out with people and getting, letting them get to know us and us getting to know them and sort of decide, “Are we happy to work with each other?” And that just happened because we had extra travel money that we can spend at our own discretion. It’s really hard to justify that in the grant application: “I want to go and spend a week just hanging out in the community, not doing anything.” I mean, we’re doing stuff. Nothing specific to the project. It’s just relationship building. But that is so essential if you actually want to have a good project later on down the road, but you almost have to do it on your own time.

This is also the point that Lee made: relationship building seems unproductive of knowledge. In the knowledge production economy of academia, the slow rhythm imposed by the principle of relationality seems unsustainable, and it is hard to imagine how any researcher could justify not publishing or initiating new research at a fast pace. Yet, as Lee explained, this is the way that he conducts research and even when results are not apparent, research is happening:

I think that there’s this tension of pumping out knowledge or publications and the fact that communities need to move at their pace. And it looks very different for community-based researchers than it does to people who don’t need to take that approach to research. But, at the end of the day, if the university wants to get rid of me because I’m working on publishing stuff that’s being driven by community-based processes, then that’s okay with me ... if I have to give up on everything that I got into this game to begin with then why would I stay? I’m applying (for tenure) in January. I don’t know what’s going to happen; maybe they’ll say, “You haven’t produced enough because you’re spending all this time

hanging out in communities instead of writing your publications.” But the answer to that, for me, is “Actually, that is the publication process; you just don’t see it as such.”

This attitude of slow relationship building is precisely what will foster the trust of communities because it becomes a researcher’s hallmark. Wilson shared how his relational approach to research has opened doors to fruitful collaborations for him, even if at the time nothing seemed to be happening:

I was talking with this Elder once; I can’t even remember what we were talking about, but it came around to research, and I wanted to do something. And I was asking for her permission to do this, and she’s saying, “I’ve been watching you; we’ve seen you hanging out here for the last 15 years. We know that you’re a good person; go ahead and do it.” Then, it was really easy to take it to that next step because you had already built up a relationship and you build up a reputation in the community, so people will trust you to do things properly.

Lavallee further emphasized how Indigenous methodology must embody researchers’ relationships with knowledge. She said that Indigenous methods are “*something like participatory action research but different*” and that it is the inner connection to spirit that differentiates Indigenous methodologies from most western methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative. Lavallee illustrated this point by retelling how she turned to spirit when she was stuck during her PhD. She explained how this got her through:

And how it differs is that our knowledges are embedded. And it’s also Spirit. There’s a component there that it is not religion. It’s Spirit. And Spirit guides our work. So, when you talk about Anishinaabe -Based Reflection, I’m not an artist and this method. ... I didn’t know where to go with it. I went to ceremony. I went to the Sweat Lodge. And I was just

thinking about it. I was in the bush. And then this came to me. And I'm like, "Oh, Migweetch." That wasn't mine. That method came to me, through Spirit. And this is where I was afraid to articulate that to my supervisor at the time. Like, he's going to think I'm crazy. But in my doctoral work, if you read it, I said "Migweetch for Spirit, for guiding, for giving me this method" or something like that. And when I talked to my participants, I told them about that experience, and they were Indigenous. And then I said, you need to name this for me, I can't name this. The name "Anishinaabe Symbol-Based Reflection" came from my participants. The method came through ceremony and Spirit, and the name came from the community when I started to say, "Okay, this happened in the Sweat Lodge." I think that's the uniqueness about that, is the ceremony and Spirit, and you can't fake that.

To illustrate further the connection between methodology and epistemology in Indigenous research, the following section presents in detail the research method of using tobacco as giving and receiving consent. This method most clearly demonstrates how Indigenous methodologies are, in principle, supposed to be coherent with Indigenous epistemologies, but this discussion also brought up some contentious issues surrounding the misrepresentation and misuse of this methodology.

Making Relationships through Tobacco in Indigenous Methodology.

In "Tobacco Ties: The Relationship of the Sacred to Research," Wilson Danard and Restoule (2010) explain how they "aspire to raise consciousness of the spiritual power of tobacco in a modern context and the responsibility of using tobacco ties as a research methodology" (p. 29). In sum, this article explains how offering tobacco is widely viewed as a valid method for obtaining consent from Indigenous participants, especially from Elders. Yet, Wilson Danard and Restoule (2010) argue that using tobacco as a research method is much more than that. Based on

their research with Elders, they suggest that tobacco is a way to “activate” several relationships at once: the most direct of these relationships is with the Elder, but on another level, tobacco also initiates a relationship with spirit:

One Elder describes tobacco as the “911 call to the Creator.” However, in establishing this connection to the Creator we realize that it is more than merely a tool or method; it is a practice of faith continued from the beginning of Creation. It follows that, in the use of tobacco, there is a great deal of responsibility one must accept. Indigenous research methodologies are founded on relationships, which must, in turn, be based on respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility. (p. 30)

The principle of relationality is thus embodied and becomes enacted in the gesture of making a tobacco offering. When discussing the significance of offering tobacco, what became evident was that tobacco is not compensation or payment to an Elder for participating in research; it is a gift. Moreover, gift giving is in itself an important feature of an Indigenous worldview because it makes reciprocal relationships possible: “A gift creates an ongoing exchange. A gift is something for nothing, except that, certain obligations are attached” (Wall Kimmerer, 2013, p. 29).

Offering tobacco to an Elder does not oblige them to share knowledge or answer a question, even if the offering is accepted. Unlike the western research consent form that establishes certain parameters for the relationship between the researcher and the participant, within Indigenous research, offering tobacco is an act of humility that opens up the researcher to the *possibility* of receiving something from the relationship, as Lee says, it is merely “*creating the potential*” for a relationship to develop and for a meaningful exchange to take place.

In my conversation with Wilson Danard, she explained that offering tobacco is much deeper than just a means to get information or to get consent and that when one uses tobacco within

the context of research, one must be aware of this: *“Tobacco is medicine. So, do you know how to use tobacco? Do you know how to engage in the Spirit of tobacco? To give and receive that?”* Like Lee, she also emphasized that when using tobacco, *“There has to be a relationship and a knowing. And who knows that and who has earned the right to share that?”*

Deer also described how, within a Mohawk context, tobacco carries great importance, and she cautioned people about using it in their research:

So, if somebody is doing their master’s and in their research they want to use tobacco without speaking to people about it first, using it without any knowledge of why tobacco is used in the community, I don’t encourage that because it is part of our culture, it’s the way we give and receive, and it is ceremonial as well.

To reinforce this idea, Lavallee discussed the importance of connecting this method with teachings on tobacco. She retold an experience of explaining the meaning of tobacco before using this method to obtain consent:

So, even if someone is Indigenous, and they don’t carry those teachings, if they want to use tobacco as a form of consent in their research, they need to get someone who carries that knowledge to then share that knowledge. So, for instance, I did research with the Indigenous community in Toronto. I had an option for people to receive tobacco as informed consent or sign a consent form or both. Even though they were all Indigenous people, I still provided that teaching about what tobacco was and why I was giving this and what this meant. And there was something that happened where apparently there were people in the room who really didn’t meet the criteria for the research, but there was an incentive, so they were there, and I got wind of it. So, I talked about this tobacco for about 5 or 10 minutes. And then I went around individually; there was lots of noise, lots of people,

so nobody was singled out. And some went. They didn't accept it. And they sat, but they sat there because it did not look bad. But they didn't say anything. So, they didn't participate because they knew, and they knew the meaning of that tobacco.

So, to offer tobacco without being able to explain its meaning is nonsensical. To offer tobacco to participants, assuming that it is just a protocol one should do but without any understanding, is disrespectful to Indigenous knowledge. As Lavallee explained, when that is the case, it is better to refrain from offering tobacco:

I really feel that they have to have the knowledge within themselves, if they're Indigenous. But, if you're not Indigenous, then why use tobacco as a form of consent? Use the traditional western, the academic traditional consent form? Why do you feel like you need to do that? So, it's like, why are you doing that in the first place? Why tobacco?"

Rowe also stressed that the attitude of the researcher is very important to enabling a relationship to take place through tobacco: *"And so, looking back: where's the humility? And the relationality? And the understanding that that needs to occur in each new interaction?"*.

Focusing on gift giving and on relationship building within Indigenous methodologies implies that if one does not have tobacco, or if tobacco is not the appropriate gift, as in some Indigenous communities that do not have that practice, then what is important is to give *something*. Indeed, the exterior form of the method, the tobacco, must not deter one from the true purpose of the exchange, which is to create a meaningful relationship for knowledge to be shared, as Lee highlighted:

[Offering tobacco] is really an expression of the relationship and the respect and a kind of togetherness. So, a symptom of settler colonialism, again, is when people get hung up on the form, as opposed to what the function is. And the function is to exchange something, to

have that relationship. And I don't think that the proliferation of people giving tobacco is necessarily a bad thing, but where it gets weird, if you're giving it to someone who doesn't do tobacco. I've been in situations where someone who just didn't know that a certain nation doesn't do tobacco, they walk up to somebody, and here is some tobacco: "Can you give me some answers?" And the person's like, "Why are you giving me tobacco? That's not even who we are? We don't do that." So, it's embarrassing.

What Lee was also noting is that there is sometimes a discrepancy between the relational principle and the way that research is conducted by non-Indigenous researchers. For Rowe, this is a symptom of placing a western way of doing research on top of an Indigenous method. To further analyze this phenomenon, she identified this approach to Indigenous research as the "checklist approach":

Here's a checklist for how to do Indigenous research: Have you found yourself an Elder? Check. Have you made tobacco ties? Check. Have you ... and the list goes on. The absurdity of it, I feel, is that it is encapsulated in that, "Oh, it's just this checklist, and as long as we do all of these things, then we're doing Indigenous research." And for me, and you touched on it, it's like: What is the meaning? What does it actually mean that I'm offering tobacco? What does tobacco mean? What are the teachings related to each of those pieces? Is it appropriate in the area that you're working? So sometimes tobacco isn't the appropriate offering. And so, learning the different protocols, and what those protocols mean, and having those initial conversations and discussions to ensure that the protocols that are being engaged with are really rooted in that space and in that place.

The "checklist approach" arises when there is no clear understanding of the importance of creating meaningful relationships with the people with whom we want to learn or, as noted earlier, with

knowledge itself. All the researchers I spoke with unanimously emphasized that building meaningful research relationships takes time and effort. Therefore, the quality of an Indigenous research study could be potentially assessed by the amount of time researchers are willing to spend building relationships, and this includes giving the community time to assess them. Lee spoke from experience when he explained the time it takes to “get to know each other”:

The one thing that I did think of when you're leading up to the tobacco question is that point about methodology and just the length of time it takes to do this kind of research. I think about the relationships I have with First Nations, there's some I work with that I've had long term relationships with, but some I've only met in the last few years. It takes years and years to do it right. And what I mean by do it right is show up when asked and show up without expectation of getting anything out of it. I've done so much pro-bono work, if you want to say it like that. I've done work for communities that they needed done because we're interested ultimately in a research relationship. But, when they asked me to show up and do stuff with them, I just show up without any expectation it's going to lead to anything. Maybe it will, maybe it won't, and it just takes a long time, and rightfully so because there's assessing you, assessing me.

Additionally, considering the history of research in Indigenous communities, this investment of extra time and energy on the part of researchers is justified. Lee spoke about this, too, from experience:

I can tell that they've had bad experiences with researchers in the past. It's an Anishinaabe community. They know my story. They know I'm from Fort William, they know I'm adopted in, and they know my research, and then they also know that other communities vouch for

me, but they're also just doing their own process. And so, we are now getting to the point where we're collaborating on a research project, but it's been years.

Additionally, not rushing into research relationships denotes humility and acknowledges that it takes time to learn from people. Rowe underlined this point when she discussed how she approached Indigenous communities in her area when attempting to create relationships:

Like I said earlier, just because I'm Cree, doesn't mean I can go into any community, and I'm living right now just outside Seattle, on the lands of the Squamish Nations. I moved here three years ago. I'm still building relationships and building community. I'm understanding what it means to be in good relations with the Indigenous peoples of these lands. I have no assumption that I can just go in and start doing research here. Most of the research that I continue to do is on the relationships that have been built over the last 15 years back in Canada. And it's so frustrating to me to think that there are people who just have that assumption that "Okay, I'm here, and I'm going to do this research." And maybe there'll be a time when those relationships that I've built will result in working together collaboratively on some sort of work. Maybe it won't, but I'm definitely not assuming that I have the right to go in and insert myself into any of the work here.

These testimonies from Indigenous researchers reveal an obvious limitation to this kind of community-based relational research approach, which is that a project would be difficult to carry out if it involved more than one community. This was a point made by Wilson:

I think that's why it's hard to do research that it's in a whole bunch of different communities. It makes it a lot easier to just do research in a couple of communities. So, you can get to know the people there and have long term relationships there; that makes it so much easier if you already know people because you've already invested all that time

in the relationship building, so then you can take the relationship a step further. But, if you got to start from scratch, and say you're going to do a research project across 30 different communities, you could spend the whole year just building relationships in those communities first, before you do anything else. It's hard.

In sum, methodologically speaking, when conducting Indigenous research, it is crucial for a researcher to take time to get to know Indigenous community members and let community members get to know them. However, principles guide the relationships within a research team? How important are relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers in collaborative projects? This was a significant topic when we discussed relationships, and it was a concern for Indigenous scholars who saw engaging in collaborations as risky for themselves.

Research Collaborations in Indigenous Research.

Questions around the nature and importance of research relationships in Indigenous research arose from the two trends identified by the scoping review. First, since the publication of the TRC (2015), the number of Indigenous research projects has doubled. This suggests that there has been a nationwide institutional push since 2015 to do more Indigenous research across fields. Second, most of this research was done through collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. Therefore, the surge of interest in Indigenous research means that Indigenous faculty members have been solicited to engage in collaborative ventures. Additionally, most of the collaborative studies that I read seemed to take for granted this relationship and did not discuss whether it was an easy or difficult relationship to develop. Most studies omitted to discuss the dynamics of collaborative relationships, their implications for negotiating power, and the risks involved for Indigenous faculty when they engage in such ventures. Among the exceptions, the article by Hart et al. (2017) titled “Working across Contexts: Practical

Considerations of Doing Indigenist/Anti-Colonial Research” sheds some light on the complex processes of negotiation that happen across cultural divides in Indigenous research.

As one of the authors of this article, Rowe brought a deeper understanding of the contentious issues at hand in our conversation. First, to do Indigenous research *credibly*, many non-Indigenous researchers have turned to Indigenous faculty members to include them on their team. But as Hart et al. (2017) explain, research collaborations require a great deal of negotiation because each person’s location carries a political and historical weight that makes working across “multiple contexts and accountabilities” difficult (p. 335). Additionally, Indigenous researchers must assess the intentions and motivations of non-Indigenous researchers and whether or not they have “internalized the principles outlined by Indigenous researchers” or whether they will have the task to educate them in such principles (p. 337). Hart et al. (2017) explain that the greatest difficulty remains grounding a collaborative Indigenous research project in an Indigenous epistemology:

The Cree values guiding our research led us to highlight and consciously honor relationships. Affirming the links between the personal and the political, we knew that working effectively across contexts within the team was necessary if we were to be able to negotiate the broader contexts. (p. 337)

When asked to elaborate on what principles should guide a good collaborative relationship, Rowe explained that the meeting ground for a mixed team should be an anti-colonial framework, as this would be meaningful for all team members and could be a means for creating a collaborative space in which decision-making could occur:

The agreement is that we are working within this anti-colonial framework, we’ve come together, and we have this agreed-upon way of working. And what that means is that we

are inherently going to address power. And we are going to think deeply about what it means to include Indigenous voices and priorities, and what if that doesn't align with what we originally thought our project would look like? And so, if we agree that we're going to come together based in this space, then everything else, the decisions, the direction needs to come from that agreement.

A good collaborative research relationship must be based on the principles of respect, reciprocity, and relationality, but as Lee explained, this is hard to do:

I think in principle many people can do Indigenous research. And what makes it Indigenous? Is it decolonizing? Does it centre on the needs of communities? Does it decentre heteropatriarchy, [does it] include multiple voices? And so those things are a really high bar for non-Indigenous folks to hit, but I don't think it's precluded. I think non-Indigenous folks can do that work. But that's going to be heavily dependent on having good and genuine relationships.

However, when research is done without paying attention to the relationship building process with Indigenous partners (researchers or communities) and with Indigenous knowledge, then there is the risk of appropriation and tokenism.

Subtheme Three: When Relationships are Missing

The Risks of Knowledge Appropriation.

Having established the importance of a personal relationship with Indigenous knowledge in the first subtheme, I am led to discuss how the absence of this relationship looks and its consequences for Indigenous research. The relevance of this question today lies in the great number of Indigenous research projects being conducted across Canada, both by Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. Lavallee explained that she has repeatedly encountered “ill-defined”

Indigenous theoretical frameworks. Generalizing and pan-Indigenous epistemological frameworks, in her opinion, are problematic because they undermine the quality of *all* Indigenous research:

I will say that my pet peeve is when people speak to using an “Indigenous research framework,” “Indigenous Knowledge,” and they don’t define it, especially when it’s from an academic perspective. In our communities, we just know. There’s this thing called “just knowing.” But when you are trying to bring Indigenous knowledges into the academy, you have a responsibility to position Indigenous knowledge because we’re critiqued all the time. So, you’re just opening the door to critique. So, I feel that when people do use it in a way that is ill-defined, they don’t know Indigenous knowledges, and that’s why they do that, because they don’t have an understanding. So, they might have heard about it in a class or read an article and are like, “yeah, I’m going to use an Indigenous framework for my research.” And then I read through it and wonder, where is the Indigenous piece? Because you are doing research on Indigenous people, now you are saying that you are using an Indigenous framework, and people don’t say “Indigenous Theory,” because if they did, then they would have to define it. But we do have our theory, it is our teachings. So, saying “Indigenous worldview” is a pan-concept, but if you’re going to operationalize that, you have to be specific. So, what I do with my students, I tell them, if you’re talking about Indigenous knowledge, or Indigenous research framework, define that.

Lavallee was pointing out that anyone using an Indigenous theoretical framework must have more than a superficial understanding of Indigenous epistemology because they have a responsibility toward Indigenous knowledge systems. Metaphorically speaking, if Indigenous research is like a house built on the foundations of Indigenous scholars such as Smith (1999) or Kovack (2009),

then each new researcher adds a brick to the structure. If the newly added brick is solid, well cooked, and well placed, it will enhance the overall robustness and grandeur of the building. But, if the brick is half-baked, hollow, and ill-placed, it will make the structure of the building more fragile. Each weak brick, added up, will put in danger the whole building because they make it vulnerable to critique. Criticism may not only attack the obvious flaws of each frail brick but also, in the long run, may question the validity and well-foundedness of the whole building of Indigenous research.

Lavallee was also pointing out that this is a form of appropriation of Indigenous knowledge. In the last decade, there has been a revalorization of Indigeneity in Canada, and there has been a call to reconcile and build better relationships with Indigenous people. Many people have responded to that call and are interested in doing research on Indigenous issues. The problem arises when researchers want to use an Indigenous framework for their research but do not have the necessary background or knowledge base to do this. They might not necessarily have the intention of appropriation or of distortion, but the end result is the same. The difficulty lies in how easily and often this is done, which signals how little awareness there is of the depth and complexity of Indigenous knowledge systems. The notion that *anyone* can do Indigenous research is similar to the checklist approach denounced by Rowe. This lack of understanding that there must be a relationship with Indigenous knowledge is precisely what leads to cultural appropriation. Wilson illustrated this phenomenon of “jumping into” Indigenous research without prior background by explaining how this same approach would be viewed if it were to happen in other fields:

You wouldn't expect to do doctoral level research in astrophysics because you've got a degree in anthropology. So, you've got to be prepared to go and do the background stuff and build up those relationships, build up your knowledge base enough that you're ready

to do it at this level. Don't expect to jump in and do it at a doctoral level right away when you've never even thought about it before. ...

You wouldn't expect to read a book on how to play basketball and then, "Alright, I'm ready to start next week." It takes a bit of build-up to get there. You can go and start playing basketball, but don't expect that you're going to be at the same level as a professional basketball player.

Both Lavallee and Wilson were signalling the lack of humility on the part of some researchers who are still tainted by the colonial attitude that "white society can claim, appropriate, manipulate, or outright *own* Indigenous lifeways without consequence" (Leroux, 2019, p. 220). This might be an unconscious attitude, but that is exactly where the problem lies: that it is taken for granted. To reinforce this point, Wilson used the powerful metaphor of "mining":

I like to call it "mining" Indigenous knowledge. It has a couple of different senses: it's like they're just treating it like another resource that they're going to go out and build a big strip mine to take out all this knowledge, but it's also that sense of "mining," saying you discovered something, and you claim that "it's mine." So, knowledge, you can't just say it's yours, that belongs to communities and to the land.

"Mining" is a striking image because it also points to the corporate capitalistic attitude that has a complete disregard for the earth as a fragile and complex living organism. This is the attitude that has destroyed the habitats and the vital resources of many Indigenous populations across the globe. Mining also signals the clash between the Indigenous vision of knowledge as being *alive* and the western vision of knowledge as a resource to be extracted for personal gain. For Lavallee, this latter attitude is prevalent in academic circles because the system supports it, allowing researchers

to get away with this mining and doing Indigenous research with very little foundation in Indigenous knowledge:

Unfortunately, people have gotten really good at using the proper language, saying, “I’m using Indigenous knowledge, it’s this, it’s that,” and it looks great. Then it goes to CIHR [Canadian Institutes for Health Research] or SSHRC [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council] for funding, and they’re like, “this looks great.” They are talking about Indigenous knowledge, but the reason why they’re getting funding is because they’re basing it on western principles. People who come in and are truly using an Indigenous approach to research based on Indigenous knowledge are not getting those funding dollars because you need to speak the western language to get that pay. So, what we’re seeing is the success of non-Indigenous researchers who are using this language and then getting the funding and then doing the research in a western way anyway.

This paints a grim picture when we remember that Indigenous research is supposed to be governed by lofty principles such as relational accountability. The strategy of knowledge appropriation works well because most “experts” on granting committees cannot discern whether the principal researcher has a solid base in Indigenous knowledge and the proposed research rests on this foundation, or whether Indigenous knowledge is used only nominally to look good on a proposal. This is something Absolon was adamant about and pointed out in our conversation when we touched on this topic. For her, the rhetorical eloquence of academics signals an emptiness of spirit and definitely does not constitute Indigenous research but rather research *on* Indigenous peoples:

That’s the difference, is that it becomes rhetoric, and they’re talking the good talk, because academics talk a good talk. They’re experts at writing. And they’re experts at phrasing. They’re the master manipulators, academics and researchers, because they can take

something and turn it any way they want. And try to make it look like they're doing something that is anti-this or pro-that and twisting it in whatever way they want to do it. I see that, and what I see missing is the reflection of it in there, so it's lacking, it's empty of Spirit, it's empty of heart. It's empty of relational accountability.

Practicing reflexivity and relational accountability with Indigenous knowledge means that the personal relationship with knowledge must be articulated and acknowledged as a fundamental component of Indigenous research. But what if a researcher had that relationship with knowledge initially, but it was then damaged by colonial policies?

Indigenous research becomes problematic when a lack of relationship with Indigenous knowledge is evident in an Indigenous researcher. Wilson explains how researchers should be working hard to rebuild those severed relationships:

And then it makes it hard too because some people, if they were stolen as children, they don't necessarily have a relationship to community, but they should. It's a result of colonization that they don't, so it makes it really hard.

What this also implies is that a researcher's personal history will have implications for the framing and conceptualization of their research. As Wilson stated, some Indigenous researchers were "stolen" from their communities and will have to reconstruct their identity and knowledge base. Lee explained with great empathy the difficulty of "coming home" for some Indigenous researchers and how reclaiming Indigenous knowledge is a life-long process:

People are coming home, trying to heal ... But then the risk is, you'll have people who know that they're Indigenous and trying to come home, and they'll get a piece of knowledge that's legit. And that knowledge becomes crystallized, it loses its flexibility, and they become very rigid in terms of how they allow that knowledge be to be understood by

somebody else, or their understanding of it ... What do you do? They didn't have that knowledge, they know it's theirs, they get it, and now it becomes fossilized. It loses this kind of flexibility and its ability to live because they're protecting it in a way that's really rigid. But they're coming home, and it's the very first time they have that sense of connection to knowledge. And so there they are protecting it with all their might, but in that protection, it becomes rigid. So, it's a process of moving from that rigidity to the flexibility and the flux that is knowledge. Because no knowledge is rigid. It's all in flux. And so that's a bit of a process.

Even if these researchers have good reasons for lacking a solid epistemological base in their own tradition, this is nonetheless problematic for Lavalée. According to her, when they present their work as Indigenous research although it is not strong epistemologically, they unintentionally weaken the robustness of Indigenous research:

I think that even Indigenous researchers who do not have a strong understanding of Indigenous knowledges will present their work and it will not be well defined. And obviously, it will get critiqued at some point. And the pushback is, "This is Indigenous, you have no right to question it, we can do what we want." And, then they try to move forward, but that actually does a disservice for all Indigenous researchers, so a lot of times people really don't want to question Indigenous people because it's Indigenous research, because I can't really question that. But, no, we need to question that.

In this way, Lavalée pointed out an unintentional form of appropriation:

So even if they're Indigenous, they should have defined it a little bit better, so that's where I'd say there's an appropriation. But, even when someone is Indigenous, there still might be an appropriation because they might not know that culture. I recently reviewed

something, and I had to give feedback and it was strong feedback, and the person happened to be Indigenous from a global perspective. I said, "You need to define this better."

Indigenous research does not require an ancestry test; it is not based on blood quantum. Indigenous research is principle based and defending one's research using "ethnic" arguments will not make the building of Indigenous research stronger. It will only make it more fragile because the theoretical frameworks used to buttress its structure would themselves be brittle.

Lavallee spoke at length of Lee as an adopted Anishinaabe scholar who is deeply grounded in tribal knowledge:

Damien Lee is very upfront: he says, I am biologically non-native and was a baby that grew up on reserve. And he has the knowledge, Damien Lee can really embed all his work in very specific Indigenous knowledge. So, it's not to say because someone's Indigenous they can, or that someone's non-Indigenous they can't.

In sum, when the epistemological connection to Indigenous knowledge is missing, those who can read in between the lines beyond the "good talk" can tell if an Indigenous piece is hollow. What is often missing is an acknowledgement that there is a personal relationship with Indigenous knowledge, which, as Wilson stated, is required by the relational principle:

But it's not a personal touch. It's necessary. It goes back to the epistemology and ontology again. If knowledge is relational, and all our reality is relational, when you are writing about a relationship, you can't just write about one side of the relationship: "This is the knowledge I learned." Well, who the hell was learning it? You have to write about your side of the relationship too. I think it just doesn't make sense otherwise.

This "other side of the relationship" is the crux of the question of positionality, and it will be addressed in the next theme. Meanwhile, the next sub-section will examine the last element of this

theme on relationships: what happens when there is a complete lack of relationality within research teams.

Tokenism.

Conversations with Indigenous scholars revealed that many researchers are inviting Indigenous faculty into collaborative projects not as full partners but as “tokens of Indigeneity” to buttress their own projects. According to Niemann (2003), tokenism exists in universities because “the inclusion of the person or group is required or expected” within a given context but this is not done out of a genuine interest in sharing power with that person (p. 2). Tokenism consists of the symbolic and superficial involvement of a person in a project due to the desire for their sought-after characteristics, in this case Indigeneity, to be associated with that project.

Tokenized minority and racialized faculty members are often given “mascot-like roles” and are “deliberately thrust into the limelight as the university’s representative when it is in the interest of the institution to demonstrate a belief in diversity” (Niemann, 2003, p. 3). So, this calculated use of minority faculty members as “symbols of non-racism,” or as symbols of reconciliation, Indigenization, and decolonization in the case at hand, is political hypocrisy and underlines a prevailing colonial attitude (Niemann, 2003, p. 3). Individuals who seek to enlist Indigenous faculty members as tokens do so by asking them to “participate” in projects, but this participation is not offered on equal grounds and is meant only to increase the perceived credibility of the project so that it gets funded. This is exactly what Absolon denounced when she spoke of “fake” collaborations because as she explained: *“Indigenous people in those collaborations aren’t given the power, they’re brought on as tokens.”* Lee retold an experience of such an approach:

You can always tell the most outrageous forms of that kind of tokenism. You’ll get somebody emailing you two weeks before the deadline or a week before the funding

deadline, and the proposal is already written. And they'll say, do you have any comments? So that's a year too late, never mind months too late. But there are other forms that are less detectable leading up to this.

For Rowe, tokenism is linked to the checklist approach: “*It goes back to this checklist of, do I have an Indigenous researcher? Check.*” Furthermore, she explained that bad collaborations imply taking risks, not only with colleagues but more especially with Indigenous communities:

And that tokenism, “grab yourself an Indigenous researcher, and you’re set,” it’s really hard because we are accountable, and we put ourselves at risk with our community relationships. So, our career is encompassed not only within the institution but outside of the institution as well. So, it’s not like I take my researcher hat off; at the end of the day, I am the whole of my relationships, and how I walk in all of those relationships is how I will be judged in all of the aspects of my work. And I think that that can be the risk. So, being invited to be a part of a research team where you might be the only Indigenous researcher, there are so many decisions that need to be weighed when we put ourselves into those situations.

Wilson and Lavallee, as Indigenous researchers who have been doing this sort of work for more than a decade, are highly sought after for collaborations. Unfortunately, many of these invitations to collaborate are based not on respect but on opportunism:

I’ve actually had my name put on grants applications because someone left a voice mail on my phone. They said they wanted to talk to me about something. And they included that as “consulting me” and included that in the grant application. So yes, there is that problem. But hopefully it gets better. And hopefully people see through things like that and say, “Well, no, that’s the definition of bad Indigenous research and that’s not

collaboration.” Just because you said you’re doing a collaboration, that doesn’t mean you necessarily are. (Wilson)

I’ve walked away from research, I’ve walked away from publishing on a million-dollar grant that I was on, and I will not put my name with a particular researcher. It’s my way of saying, “No.” I’m not supporting your career any longer. You are making your career off the Indigenous community, and you’re not helping advance Indigenous people. Truly. Because if you were, there would be a lot of Indigenous student researchers who have come, and you’ve helped them to get their PhDs or something like that. (Lavallee)

Lavallee further explained how through reading some studies, she could tell when the language of collaboration was empty of relationality:

I don’t like the term “co-researcher.” When I read that I’m like, give me a break, they’re not the co-researchers, you’re using that terminology. And then you can see evidence when you read an article; you can see they weren’t really co-researchers ... You will notice when you read an article, you can see that the community fell out of consultation, like they were no longer involved. And sometimes what happens is they collaborate with community to get the funding, then you might have one meeting, something was said that was really off, and the community disappears.

The second overarching theme of positionality builds on relationships because, as Lee explained, it is precisely the lack of awareness concerning positionality that leads to these forms of tokenism: *“So, in terms of collaboration, there is the tokenism, and then there is this lack of, I would say, lack of sense of positionality and lack of sense of the context of colonialism.”*

Theme Two: Positionality

Subtheme One: The Importance of Positionality in Indigenous Research

Positionality in research refers to clearly and explicitly articulating one's social, economic, historical, and political position regarding the topic being researched and reflecting on how one's position influences and affects the research. This critical reflexive exercise is a central component of any qualitative research approach because the researcher *is* the instrument of research: "the interpretative nature of qualitative research places researchers in a space where their own social and historical position is a vital element in the study process" (Carter et al., 2014, p. 363).

Moreover, in Indigenous research, clearly acknowledging and reflecting on one's positionality is crucial due to the epistemological principle of relationality. In discussing the question, "who can do Indigenous research?" Kovach (2017) underlines that Indigenous identity is important to consider but that it cannot stand alone; what is even more important are relationality and situatedness:

Indigenous methodologies require researcher credibility and more important, trust. It is not simply trust in the findings and validation of data; it is about trust in relationships. This begs the question of *who* can do Indigenous methodologies? Certainly, it is more complicated than "if you're Indigenous you can and if you're not Indigenous you can't." I don't want to discount lineage and identity, but to me it is about an ongoing mutual relationship with Indigenous peoples. Indigenous research is not an option for everyone or for every inquiry pertaining to Indigenous people. However, it must be available as a methodological choice for research and researchers that are well situated in its *possibilities*.
(p. 224)

Therefore, engaging with positionality in Indigenous research requires “identity work.” It requires explicitly connecting one’s identity, background, and story with the goals of Indigenous research in such a way that they are aligned. Kovach (2017) states how this extra work on the part of the researcher is not optional but required:

I am not sure if one can do Indigenous methodologies. My experience with this methodology is that it asks more. In asking more, Indigenous methodologies require exploration of identity, and the ability to be vulnerable, a desire for restitution, and an opening to awakening. (p. 217)

To appreciate how location and positionality are connected to all the various elements of Indigenous research, I discuss here the framework proposed by Absolon (2011) in her book *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know*. In it, she describes Indigenous research as a “Petal Flower.” This metaphor creates a multilayered conception of Indigenous research, and as an organic metaphor, it underlines the interconnectedness of all the elements that compose the Flower. This metaphor also draws our attention to the environment, which will enable the Flower to bloom or not. This metaphor is composed of six main sections (Absolon, 2011, p. 50):

1) The **Roots**, which correspond to Indigenous epistemologies. They are the invisible foundations that “send the core nutrients throughout the plant and enable the Indigenous self in the search to flourish.”

2) The **Centre** of the flower is the researcher, “the self-in-relation to research.” The self includes the “situated-self in research, location, memory, motivation, sense of purpose, search for congruency.” As the centre, the researcher is connected to every part of the flower and brings all its components together.

3) The **Leaves** are the “journeys” taken by researchers. These are the processes that enable the “photosynthesis of knowledge: the transformative journeys.”

4) The **Stem** connects the roots with the flower. It is the critical consciousness of the researcher, and it keeps on track the research process.

5) The various **Petals** of the flower represent the holistic methodologies that engage the mind, body, and spirit.

Finally, 6) the **Environment** is the academic context that will allow the flower to grow and flourish or, on the contrary, will weaken the flower so that it withers. This is the academic environment, the “institution,” which can be antagonistic or supportive of Indigenous research.

In sum, this organic metaphor, as presented in Figure 7, rooted in the earth and governed by seasonal cycles, underlines the holistic and relational nature of Indigenous research. According to Absolon (2011), this characteristic is what distinguishes it the most from western research approaches. It should also be noted that when Absolon conceptualized this framework, she based it solely on research done by Indigenous scholars. For our purposes, I consider this framework to be valid for any Indigenist research, especially in terms of understanding the importance of positionality.

Figure 7

“The Petal Flower” Diagram (Absolon, 2011, p. 50)

The Petal Flower

Wholistic framework for
Indigenous methodologies
in search for knowledge

1. Roots

Foundational elements

2. Flower Centre

Self as central to the search

3. Leaves

The journey, process, transformation

4. Stem

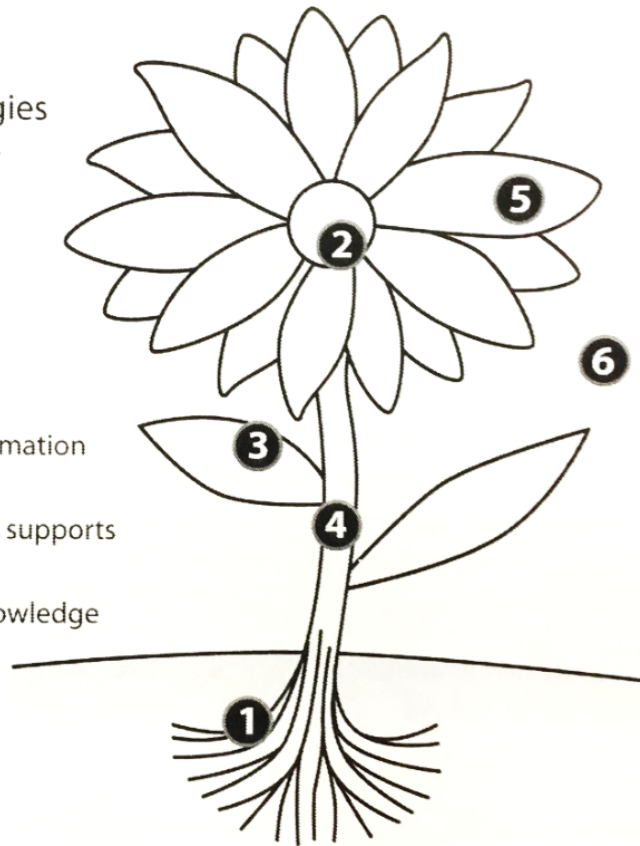
Methodological backbone and supports

5. Petals

Diverse ways of search for knowledge

6. Environment

Academic context



K. Absolon, 2007

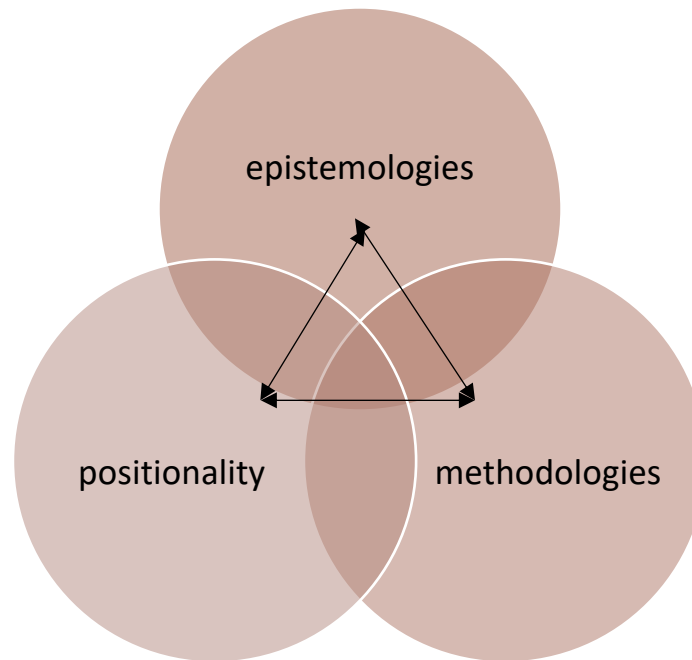
The “Flower Centre”: The Self as Central.

For Absolon (2011), in Indigenous research, the researcher – which includes their location, history, memory, motivation, and sense of purpose – is at the centre of the research process: “Indigenous methodologies are as much about *who* is doing the searching as the *how* of the search. It reflects the paradigm and worldviews of its roots” (p. 50). This statement echoes the conclusion of the scoping review regarding the importance of positionality in Indigenous research, for Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers alike. The scoping review concluded that it is impossible to assess the quality and trustworthiness of an Indigenous research project if positionality is subtracted from the equation and focus placed only on the alignment of theoretical frameworks with methodologies. Furthermore, as Indigenous research is based on relational

Indigenous knowledge, it is as Wilson stated: “*You have to write about your side of the relationship.*” Indigenous research can thus be illustrated as an equilateral triangle (Figure 8) where each component has the same weight and is interconnected to the other two.

Figure 8

Indigenous Research as Equilateral Triangle



A holistic consideration of positionality as the centre of the Petal Flower (Absolon, 2011) includes place (land), history (memory), and community (family); this means looking at positionality as existing within an intricate web of relationships. Additionally, analyzing positionality means analyzing the situatedness of a researcher. This refers to examining how well a person is situated within a community, in relation to land, and in relation to knowledge. For Absolon (2011), this assessment of positionality and situatedness is crucial because Indigenous research cannot be separated from the greater context of colonization (land, memory, and community) or from the ongoing struggle of Indigenous peoples (decolonization, healing, and

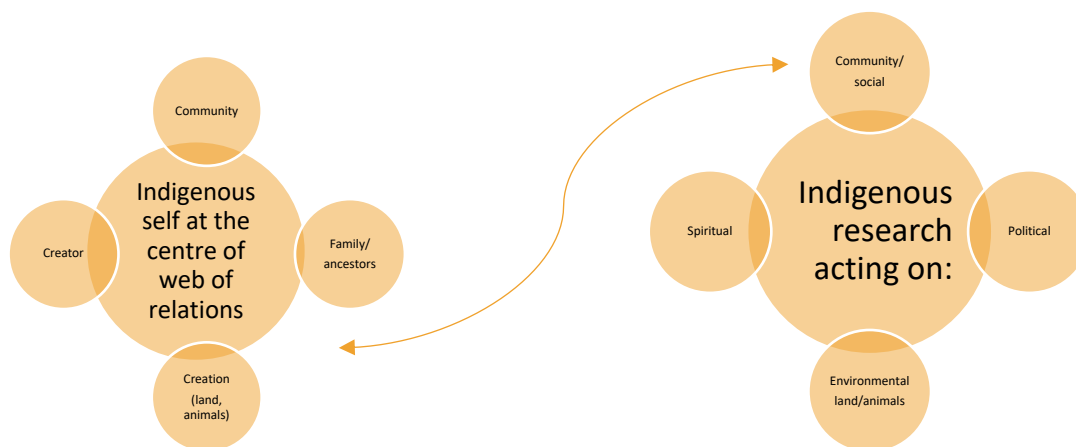
reclaiming). Indeed, it is this larger context that characterizes Indigenous research and gives it its mission and meaning:

Situating self in the search seemed essential to the purpose and nature of the search and appeared to be directly related to improving social, environmental, political, and educational conditions of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous re-search has meaning because of who we are as Indigenous peoples and our accountability and responsibility to our ancestors, family, community, Creation, and the Creator. (Absolon, 2011, p. 50)

This quote also brings to light the parallel that exists between the self-in-relation to family, community, creation, and Creator to which the self is accountable, and the larger project of Indigenous research, which seeks to restore the severed connection between community, land, and Creation (see Figure 9). The self as researcher therefore carries within themselves the larger decolonizing and healing project of Indigenous research, which is why positionality is so important:

Figure 9

Connecting the Self and Indigenous Research



Discussing Positionality with Indigenous Scholars.

During my conversations with Indigenous scholars, they all agreed that the researcher is at the centre of the research process. Rowe explicitly illustrated how, as an Indigenous researcher, she cannot separate who she is from her research:

It's not like I take my research hat off at the end of the day. I am the whole of my relationships and how I walk in all those relationships is how I will be judged in all aspects of my work.

The researcher as the centre of the research process was a rich theme that will be discussed in the following subsection. This theme contains multiple layers, described as follows:

- 1) *The Self and Knowledge*: This first level discusses the intimate connection between epistemology and positionality.
- 2) *The Inner Process*: This second level refers to how researchers must prepare themselves to do Indigenous research. This includes critical self-reflection and unpacking of settler colonialism notions of research. Additionally, the “inner preparation” includes looking at one’s deeper motivations to do Indigenous research.
- 3) *Distorted Positionalities*: Lastly, as positionality is crucial in Indigenous research, I discuss what happens when positionality is skewed, omitted, or appropriated. This section will discuss the impacts on Indigenous partners and audiences and on the field of Indigenous research when positionality is manipulated.

The Self and Knowledge.

Disclosing positionality in Indigenous research reveals relationships: it unveils how one has accessed Indigenous knowledge (sources) and one’s relationship with that knowledge. Using the analogy of personal relationships with Indigenous knowledge proposed by Wilson in the

relationships theme, positionality statements indicate, “This is my wife” or “This is my new friend.”

The self as the centre of research also allows the researcher to claim authority to speak about certain issues. Positionality means answering the question, “Who are you?” but also the question, “How do you know what you know?” The answers to these questions make visible to others the researcher’s relationships and reiterate that this knowledge is not owned individually but shared collectively. Consequently, the greatest threat to Indigenous knowledge is breaking up these relationships. Absolon (2011) states that when Indigenous researchers clearly state their positionality and deeply reflect on their relationships (with land, community, and history), they are in fact reclaiming these disrupted connections, mending broken ties, and affirming their existence within a larger web:

Indigenous research methodology has been a process for me, whereby, I make the invisible – visible. Colonization has attempted to make our realities invisible and has tried to turn us into a disappearing race. ... I contest the notion that we are a vanquished race or remnants of the past. (p.12)

In our conversation, Absolon reiterated her views:

I still maintain that, when you’re Indigenous and you are the searcher, your methodology is informed by that: it’s informed by your indigeneity, it’s informed by your history and your roots and who you are. And even if you are on a journey of recovering that, that is still informed by who you are.

Our conversation took place while Absolon was re-editing her book (2011) to prepare for a second edition. With more than a decade of added experience in this field, she clarified how today, in light

of the expansion of Indigenous research, she would include a new chapter on the importance of reflecting on positionality for non-Indigenous researchers:

I have talked about it in the second edition, distinguishing Indigenous methodologies that are formed by someone's indigeneity and then the non-Indigenous scholars, searchers, who are forming a critical consciousness, who are on pathways of decolonizing, of unpacking colonial methods, who are disrupting the erasure, who are combating the amnesia.

Therefore, the personal relationship to Indigenous knowledge that informs the theoretical framework of a project must be explicit; whether from the point of view of Indigeneity or from the stance of anti-colonialism, in both cases, it must be clear. Absolon added that if non-Indigenous researchers wish to work with Indigenous knowledge, they must make it clear to the reader that their epistemology is “borrowed,” informed by Indigenous knowledge, instead of claiming ownership and “stealing” knowledge:

I've had in my classes non-Indigenous students who ask me, “What about me? How can I do this?” So, you can do a holistic methodology that is informed by Indigenous knowledge ... In that way, acknowledging the source of who you are learning from, giving credit where credit is due, acknowledging the genealogy of knowledge and disrupting that erasure that Indigenous knowledge systems don't contribute to the buffet of methodologies, or that Indigenous knowledge systems don't exist. ... So, you can do a holistic practice, but acknowledge who you're learning from, acknowledge who's informed your practice. Don't be like those mainstream theorists that took from Indigenous experiences' “Dream Work” and never acknowledged Indigenous peoples or took from our “Life Stages” and never

acknowledged us. Don't be a thief because that's supposed to be an automatic dismissal in the academy.

Parallel to this, Rowe had stated earlier the importance of “relational explicitness” regarding the use of Indigenous knowledge. Lee also echoed this and explained the connection between positionality and authority, clarifying the political weight of positionality in the context of Indigenous research:

The function of positionality in Indigenous Studies, aside from just being, I would say, rooted in most Indigenous approaches to knowledge sharing, “Who are you?” and even just to relationship building, “Who are you?”: that's positionality. But because Indigenous Studies isn't restricted to just Indigenous peoples, positionality has a higher political importance in that space because how do you have the authority to speak to this issue? You can maybe write on this issue and speak to this issue and not be Indigenous, but if we don't know what your relationships are and how far away from genuine relationships you are, then we can't decide for ourselves if what you're saying holds any water.

The Self and Intuitive Knowing. Thinking about positionality and Indigenous knowledge must also include “intuitive knowing” and “embodied knowing.” Indigenous knowing, for Absolon (2011), includes a kind of “spiritual” knowing:

Spirituality is inherent to Indigenous epistemology, which sees everything in relation to Creation and recognizes that life has Spirit and is sacred. ... Spiritually derived knowledge infers that knowledge also comes from dreams, visions, ceremony, and prayer. (p. 60)

Intuitions are not rational or logical explanations; they a *direct* way of knowing (V. Deloria, 2006). This Indigenous way of knowing cannot be separated from the individual subjectivity, as it is part of a person's worldview and sense of reality. To illustrate this, Rowe discussed how deep reflection

on herself as a Swampy Cree woman led her to firmly ground all aspects of her research in her specific location:

When I was working on my master's research, Dr. Hart really pushed me to, moving beyond the generalization of Indigenous research, how do you assess what it means to come from that space and place and location and specific tribal methodologies? And so that's where my Muskego Inninuwuk Methodology was born; it was those really enriching conversations with Dr. Hart, pushing it further in terms of how to be really rooted within Indigenous, Swampy Cree ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies, and what could that look like?

The back and forth between positionality and epistemology creates a rich intersection at which location, theoretical framework, and methodology are interlinked and feed each other, and this alignment brings integrity to the research. For Rowe, this reflection on Swampy Cree epistemologies led to profound consequences for the methodologies she went on to use for her research. Indeed, she used tobacco because it connected to her positionality and held personal meaning in her Indigenous worldview:

What does this actually mean that I'm offering tobacco?

What does tobacco mean?

What does this mean to me personally? And what does it mean to the person that I'm offering the tobacco to?

Moreover, this process of reflection that connects positionality to knowledge was essential for Rowe. Otherwise, she said, “*there is no depth or meaning or really internalized understanding in that for me.*” Additionally, when Rowe delved deeper into “how she comes to know” as a Swampy Cree researcher, dreaming emerged a valid research methodology:

For me, dreams have always been a constant in terms of my way of knowing and relating and understanding and making sense of the world around me. For a while, I didn't even want to really acknowledge it, until I started to reconnect with Cree cultural teachings, with ceremony, and to really have meaningful conversations with Dr. Hart about ways of knowing and different types of knowledges. Within those conversations, I was really able to come to see that what was given to me, in my dreams, were really important aspects of what I bring to the work that I do. I was really supported and encouraged through Dr. Hart's support in terms of validating that this is an important way of knowing within Cree culture. And of course, if my research work is rooted within my epistemology, this would be natural; this is the way that we would come to know and make sense of the world around us.

The Self and Embodied Knowing.

Embodied experiential Indigenous knowledge is directly tied to certain experiences on land or in community (Castellano, 2004). First, we must consider more closely what embodied knowing means. The concept of embodiment implies that, as humans, we know the world because our bodies are inseparable from it; our skin does not separate us from the world but connects us to it (Vettraino et al., 2017; Vettraino & Linds, 2018). This also implies that the body is not “an object” that the mind knows but instead is “a grouping of constantly changing lived-through meanings” (Vettraino & Linds, 2018, p. 18). Through embodiment, we learn and enact knowledge in the activities we engage in with our bodies. Our knowledge is constantly created and updated through our interactions with the world and with others around us (Lindgren & Johnson-Glenberg, 2013). Embodied learning means that we recognize that both the mind and the body process,

simultaneously, the constant flow of input we receive from the outside and make sense of this as embodied knowing (Munro, 2018).

For Indigenous researchers, there is a crossroads between the embodied experience of learning and knowing, as presented above, and the embodied form of knowledge that is specific to Indigenous epistemologies (Meyer, 2008). To illustrate “Indigenous embodied knowing,” I discuss here Hawaiian epistemology as a situated example of an embodied Indigenous way of knowing.

Hawaiian knowledge is referred to as the epistemology of “*aloha*”, where “*alo* means presence and *ha* means breath” (Soon, 2016, p. 261); Soon explains that “through sharing breath and being present we are able to experience and understand the world” (Soon, 2016, p. 261). This knowledge illustrates the embodied holistic knowing that comes from doing, being, and living in the world through relationships. Within this worldview, Cartesian dichotomies between mind and body dissolve, and knowing takes place at all levels simultaneously: “Body is the central space in which knowing is embedded. Our body holds the truth. Our thinking body is not separate from our feeling mind” (Meyer, 2008, p. 223). Furthermore, within this epistemology, the source of knowledge is rooted explicitly in a part of the body called “*na’au*” (Soon, 2016, p. 260). The Hawaiian word for “wisdom,” “*na’auao*”, is derived from *na’au* and translates as “gut emotions” (Soon, 2016, p. 261). This indicates that knowledge comes from the gut and is thus revealed embodied knowledge (Meyer, 2008; Soon, 2016).

In sum, positionality and embodied knowing mean that knowing is tied to a way of life, or a way of relating to land and place. In our conversation, Lee explained how in his teaching practice, this form of embodied knowing is important so that his students ground their learning in experience:

I take my students to the land, but not as a didactic thing but more as where they're going to break out of the rigidity of the classroom and they're going to see that everything is much more complicated than you might hold on to, in the book sense. And when you go to land, learning is much more emergent I find. We can talk about the principle of relationality, but it's not until you're on the land that you actually feel it, and you feel it and see it in ways that you don't expect.

Embodied knowing is also what Wilson was alluding to when he explained how difficult it is to “teach” Indigenous knowledge in a classroom setting:

This is probably the hardest concept for most people to grasp if they haven't grown up just knowing this innately to begin with, and it's incredibly hard to teach anyone because it's something that you have to live, and then once you live it for a long time, then you recognize it, and it makes sense. (Wilson in Coburn, 2021)

However, Lee offered the nuance that there is no direct opposition between “book-knowing” and “land-based knowing”; these are simply different ways of knowing, and a well-rounded Indigenous scholar should have both because they complement each other:

I'm really careful to avoid any binaries between “books” and “land.” I see them just as a spectrum of knowledge, not as one or the other. And I say that because I've seen parts of this kind of conversation come up where people who have land-based knowledge will use land-based knowledge to shut people up, say in classrooms, and that's violence, that's not why they're there. I've had colleagues who had both, and who had land-based knowledge and academic knowledge and get critiqued by their communities, and their community says, “You don't know what you're talking about, because everything you're saying is from a book,” when actually, it's a mix of both.

Nonetheless, Wilson Danard specified that book knowledge alone is not enough if an Indigenous person trying to “come home” to reconnect and reclaim identity:

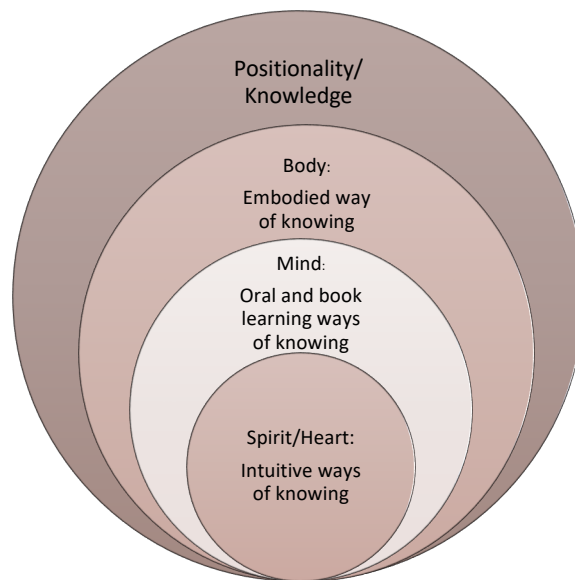
I understand that because of colonization, people think that they could go to university and learn how to be Indigenous, but they can't ... you have to go out into the land; there are other things you have to do.

To explain this point further, Wilson Danard gave the specific example of a man who was trying very hard to be Mi'kmaw in a purely academic way:

He was adopted when he was two into an Amish community until he was an adult man. Then he started being an academic Indian, a Mi'kmaw person ... so this Amish guy, he went to get his PhD, but he never lived like that. The last time I saw him, he still looks Amish, like how he dresses; it influences him so much. I don't know if he ever went “home”; I don't know if he ever went back to his community, or engaged, or understood it, but he was so well read, he knew everything about being a Mi'kmaw person, he was smart like that. But I felt like he needed to ... you need to go fasting, you need to go sit on the land, you need to go and hear your own Spirit. Like this is what being Anishinaabe is to me; it's not just an identity on my status card. In conclusion, the connection between positionality and knowledge is important because we must consider that Indigenous knowledge is learned at different levels of the self (Figure 10).

Figure 10

Positionality and Indigenous Ways of Knowing



Note: This figure shows how researchers carry within themselves different ways of knowing depending on how they engage with Indigenous knowledge.

Considering learning at different levels of the self, how can a researcher claim to *know* Indigenous epistemologies if they have never learned them in non-academic ways? That is why it is crucial to disclose location, to explain *how* one has come to know, and to state what experiences and what relationships have shaped one's relationship to Indigenous knowledge. The difficulty then lies in most universities' failure to recognize these ways of knowing and lack of requirements for researchers doing Indigenous research to have this sort of experience in Indigenous ways of knowing.

Critical self-assessment.

The fourth component of the Petal Flower framework is the stem. This corresponds to critical self-assessment, which is what allows researchers to unpack their knowledge baggage and

become aware of any internalized colonial ways of conducting research. Critical self-assessment is also an integral aspect of qualitative research. According to Carter et al. (2014), every researcher engaging in qualitative research needs to reflect deeply on their own story, location, and past life experiences to make themselves available to listen to the stories of others. Furthermore, Carter et al. (2014) say researchers are interested in studying Indigenous issues should question even more deeply their underlying motivations. For Absolon (2011), this reflection process is there to “unearth the inner self” and make explicit all the assumptions and motivations one carries about doing research (p. 13). Absolon (2011) discovered that, for Indigenous researchers, research was a question of “survival”: “the ultimate motive is to make our knowledge and methodologies live on” (p. 78). This was the opinion of Lavallee:

More and more Indigenous peoples are doing their own research. They are, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith says, “researching yourself back to life.” That term was coined I think before Linda, by Elders, but you know, we are researching ourselves back to life.

These motivations go beyond personal desire for success or recognition; they connect researcher to the “Indigenous struggle.” However, before being able to further this “cause,” researchers need to “recover from colonialism” (Absolon, 2011, p. 81). This recovery from colonialism is done, again, through critical self-reflection on one’s positionality and relationship to knowledge and to knowledge production. For Absolon, Indigenous research must not be influenced by colonial ways of thinking if it is to truly embody Indigeneity:

We have had to weed through the thick of colonial knowledge, colonial theories, colonial methods, many of which have been expropriated from Indigenous knowledge systems without being acknowledged. ... I distinguished “research” without a hyphen as being western dominated research, and then “re-search” is what we are doing. Conscious

searchers are doing their searching again with Spirit, with heart, with a critical consciousness, with a critical intelligence and finding different pathways to embody what it is that they're doing.

Using the expression to “weed through” colonial knowledge implies removing the unwanted components, separating, and discarding the unnecessary and superfluous. For Absolon, this is important, or researchers might perpetuate the very thing that they are fighting against. Critical self-assessment is required of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers alike:

So, they might be Indigenous doing Indigenous research, but they haven't unpacked yet. They're doing it from a colonial knowledge set. ... That's why it's the centre. That's why location to me is, it's the doorway to understanding how you're going to enact a methodology that you think you're going to enact. So, there's a difference between what people think they're going to do, and then what they're actually able to do. Most people have come into this through what I call “colonial research trauma,” meaning they have been socialized, they've been taught about research through colonial theories and methodologies that have erased Indigenous knowledge. So, for Indigenous searchers, there's that stuff that gets in the way. There's that internalized colonialism that's getting in the way. So, they need to unpack that; that's the same with non-Indigenous researchers.

This preparation for doing Indigenous research is something Absolon did for herself, and, as she explained it, it was crucial to the process of her own Indigenous research:

You need to be able to be doing your own journey of decolonizing. I think the difference with me was that at the time of my PhD, I had been teaching in the academy for already 10 years. I had already been teaching decolonizing curriculum. So, I had already been exposed to and working with the works Paulo Freire and bell hooks and Albert Mimi. I had

been teaching decolonizing knowledges and processes in undergraduate social work classes for 10 years already. So, I had already that in my own journey, and through the mentors that I've had, over the years, I had been working on my decolonizing and my unpacking. So, I came to my project with this consciousness and with this awareness that what the education system exposes us to isn't the be-all-end-all, that there's a lot missing, that there's a lot omitted. And everything Indigenous has been omitted ... As soon as you start decolonizing, you start being able to see what others can't see, what is missing. You start to know what other people don't know because they haven't started unpacking. And that's the whole point of where I talk about "making the invisible visible," because colonialism has rendered this erasure invisible.

Likewise, in *Implementing Indigenous Ways of Knowing into Research: Insights into the Critical Role of Dreams as Catalysts for Knowledge Development*, Rowe (2014) explains how making dreaming a research methodology first involved a "personal decolonization," which meant reconnecting with those severed ways of knowing; therefore, it constitutes "a personal journey with identity, belonging, membership, connection and meaning." (p. 2). In our conversation, Rowe described how this process of "personal decolonization" should be considered as the basic "inner preparation" necessary to do Indigenous research:

The internal process that researchers need to engage in order to have the basic fundamental pieces to be able to work with an Indigenous approach or even consider working on Indigenous research projects is, "Who am I?"; "For what purpose am I doing this work?"; "What am I contributing to?"; "What am I leaving behind?"

All those different questions: "How do I know?"; "Have I done my own decolonial work?"

The goal of this process is to be lucid, at the outset, about one's assumptions about knowledge production. This leads to honesty with oneself, with peers, and with the people one wants to do research with. This ultimately adds rigour and integrity to the research and, as Rowe explained, if every researcher did this, there would actually be fewer people doing Indigenous research:

What I envision as a basic requirement to do the work is to understand, "Who am I really?"; "Who am I in relation to Indigenous peoples in Canada?" and therefore, "What does that mean in my role as a researcher?" And I expect that in that examination, there will be a lot of researchers, if they're honest and truthful with themselves, they will be like, "I shouldn't be doing this work, this is not my place, this is not my role." And then, "How do I make sure that there's someone who is best aligned with this, that they have this opportunity?"; "How do I make space for that person?" If people are truly answering those questions, honestly, then there should be an outpouring of people leaving Indigenous research. Honestly.

Her last sentence signals that the question of positionality is a contentious issue in Indigenous research. Indeed, the question of what occurs when positionality is not clearly stated, examined, and explored when conducting Indigenous research beckons to be addressed. This issue is sensitive because of the politics of identity, which is all the more reason to be clear regarding one's positionality. When it remains obscured, when there is ambiguity and omission of location, then the doors of appropriation (of both identity and epistemology) and distortion are open.

Subtheme Two: The Hidden Self, Distorted and Appropriated Positionalities.

Ambiguity and omission of an Indigenous positionality are covert tactics that distort location. The extreme form of this distortion is Indigenous identity theft, or "self-Indigenization" or "race-shifting" (Leroux, 2019). When the question of positionality and its importance came up

in my conversations with Indigenous scholars, they shared many instances in which they had seen the manipulation of positionality first-hand. This phenomenon was not obvious to me from simply reading Indigenous research studies. The only thing that I had noted was that some authors were more transparent than others concerning their Indigenous or Settler identity and their relationships, but the prevalence of this “race-shifting” strategy was not obvious from the scoping review. Therefore, I can safely say that this point came entirely out of these conversations.

The “hidden self” is an important subtheme when discussing positionality because there is an underlying assumption that Indigenous researchers are best situated to do Indigenous research. Furthermore, positionality, whether Indigenous or Settler, is politically and historically charged in this research context. What became evident was that these tactics of Indigenous identity usurpation are used mainly by those who want to *pretend* to be Indigenous to gain credibility and authority. One could also hypothesize that there is a “Settler guilt” among certain researchers, which makes them uneasy about disclosing positionality. Today, there is a definite negative connotation whiteness, and many researchers may feel they have to carry the weight of colonialism on their shoulders. However, to elude or bypass the question altogether is worse. Whatever one’s positionality might be, transparency and honesty will ultimately make the research ethical and accountable. Lee expounded on how openness and honesty about one’s positionality as a non-Indigenous researcher is what is most valuable because Indigenous research is more about relationships than it is about ethnic identity:

Someone might be well-respected but non-Indigenous, but well respected, and communities vouch for them and that can be part of their positionality: “I’ve worked with X First Nation for 40 years, and you can go down the road and ask them, but I’m not Indigenous, and I don’t pretend to be a part of that community.” That at least gives, especially Indigenous

students in the classroom and/or an audience of readers, the opportunity to decide for themselves whether they want to put any stock in that person. And that's ultimately a form of generosity in my mind; you're being generous. You are not just being ethical, you're also being generous to say, "Here is your chance to decide for yourself," as opposed to not disclosing positionality and risking ambiguity, risking distortion, but also taking away the chance of someone to say, they might just assume, especially in written form, somebody might just assume somebody is Indigenous. So that positionality has a heightened political importance in Indigenous Studies for those reasons.

The Indigenous researchers I spoke to identified a spectrum of misrepresentation and of absence of positionality. This spectrum starts with "omission," which is simply not addressing the issue, then moves into "ambiguity," which allows doubt as to the positionality of the researcher, and then moves into outright "distortion," which takes the form of complete appropriation of Indigenous identity.

Omission and Ambiguity.

Omission is a failure to state positionality; it can seem innocent enough, but, as has been mentioned, when positionality is politically charged, omission becomes a way of avoiding relational accountability. For Absolon, this is also tied to not doing the necessary critical preparatory exercise of decolonizing one's baggage. For her, the reflexive process must be spelled out. If authors are to be credible, their efforts to decolonize research must start with themselves:

They can then write about themselves, own their truth, in the sense of, "This is where I come from, and these are my limitations, and this is why I'm doing it." Own it! And then, there's this omission that happens and, this is where I think people get duped, they think that by omitting their location, that they're at an arm's length. However, when people

locate, they are actually being more ethical and relationally accountable because the reader can then hold them accountable to say, “What gives you the right to do this?”; “You haven’t identified your positionality and relationship to the topic in relation to the people”; “You haven’t taken it into account?”; “What gives you the right?” and “What have you done?” and “What are you going to do?” All those questions are embedded in the practice of decolonizing.

According to Absolon, “locating oneself” is a new practice for western researchers who have been trained to stay “at arm’s length.” This self-location creates discomfort in having to divulge one’s assumptions, motives, and goals. Nonetheless, researchers should realize that in Indigenous research, relational accountability is not optional. Researchers have a responsibility toward the people with whom they are doing research. Relational accountability is also associated with “ethical accountability” (Donald, 2012).

“Ethical relationality” is deeply tied to Indigenous epistemologies; it is “an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference but rather seeks to understand more deeply how our different histories and experience position us in relation to each other” (Donald, 2012, p. 535). The key concept here is how different histories and experiences “position us in relation to each other” (Donald, 2012, p. 535); to not address this is to be unethical. Ethical relationality is vital in Indigenous research, especially when it is conducted by non-Indigenous researchers, as it lays an ethical foundation for the often contentious Indigenous–non-Indigenous relationship. Ethical relationality is also about addressing differences instead of denying them, and, therefore, it considers the social, cultural, and historical contexts of each researcher as part of the process of doing Indigenous research. Absolon reinforced this notion of shared responsibility by saying that researchers have to “own” their position and unpack its baggage. If positionality is like

a landmine, it is certainly better to demine this bomb than to attempt to step around it and risk having it blow up in one's face. This is something that Absolon constantly pushes her students to do:

I've been invited to be a part of a grad student's dissertation committee, and this happens with my non-Indigenous students, I just come out and ask them, "What's your interest in this?"; "Why do you want me on your committee?" I'm going to hold you accountable to your whiteness." ... I'm on this woman's committee who's doing work with strip searching in prisons. And she's just doing fantastic. She's really stepped up to the plate, because I asked her those tough questions: "What's your accountability to the Native women inside?" Own your location. You're gathering from Indigenous women because Indigenous women are populating the prisons and strip searching is having a huge impact on them. "What's your business in their business?"; "What are you going to do with this?" and "How are you going to step up to the plate of holding the systems that you represent accountable?"; "Do you have the backbone for that?" That's location. That's relational accountability. It's not about us because it's not our systems that are causing the violence and perpetuating the erasure and the amnesia. It's the colonial governments that are doing that. And people who have moved in and out of those systems with privilege and without effort have a hard time seeing that; it means that now you have to generate discomfort within your peer group.

Moreover, omissions can serve to create confusion and ambiguity. Omission can easily be seen as an oversight, but the result still might be misrepresentation simply because people might *suppose* that someone is Indigenous based on looks, name, or other factors. Absolon explained how this

tactic reduces the narrow space created in academia for Indigenous people and, interestingly, she used me as a hypothetical example of this kind of tactic:

And then, sometimes in what I've seen (on committees), people sit quietly. So, there are the researchers who are silent, and their identity gets confused and lumped into Indigenous. They don't say anything. So, what that does is that it causes somebody like me to come up and say, wait a second, this person isn't Indigenous, rather than the person stepping up and saying it. And it could be someone like you; because of your dark hair, your dark eyes, you could be seen as Indigenous. It would be like you sitting there quietly and silently, while people assume ... then it's like you're riding on the assumptions of others, and you don't say anything, silently. And in that, you're stealing space.

This example was interesting to me because, while I was born and raised in Mexico, there is no ambiguity concerning my non-Indigenous ancestry, as both my parents immigrated to Mexico from Europe. Additionally, this assumption was never made of me in Mexico because the markers of Indigeneity in Mexican society are different. In a country where almost everyone has “dark hair” and “dark eyes” and is of mixed or *mestizo* ancestry (Spanish and Indigenous), to say that someone seems Indigenous is usually grounded on more specific markers like a specific Indigenous homeland (which village or community one is from), a specific Indigenous language (e.g., Nahuatl), and a specific culture (e.g., Mayan). Even if we are talking in terms only of superficial markers, Mexico has different markers of identity related more to skin colour (how “dark” one is), eye colour, and height. This example serves to illustrate how *local* the politics of identity are and how much Indigenous identity in Canada, as in Mexico, is a social and historical construct.

Another reason mentioned by Absolon for justifying the omission of positionality lies in maintaining the stance of “being at arm’s length.” In academic writing, seldom does one include a critical self-reflective paragraph on location. Rather, writing that appears objective, observing from an elevated standpoint, astute, and analytical is usually the norm. The intellectual significance and the rationale of the research are explained, and this is seen as sufficient, but seldom do we read about the person’s relationship to the research. Some researchers, out of honesty, will state that they have a personal bias if they are insiders to the topic being studied. This is especially true if they are studying a delicate issue, such as domestic violence, incest, or adoption. In such cases, an insider perspective might even be seen to hinder their analysis. While this personal divulgence of position might be encouraged, it is by no means the academic norm. In contrast, in Indigenous research, it is required because it mirrors the epistemological principle of “*I am all my relations*” (Rowe) and embodies relational accountability. When she reviews papers, Absolon requests that authors do this, and she stated that if more and more peer reviewed journals demanded positionality, then this would slowly change the norms of academic writing and foster more reflexivity and accountability:

I peer reviewed a research paper for a journal publication and I didn’t accept it because there were two authors; one was seemingly non-Indigenous, the other one was Indigenous. The non-Indigenous author was the lead author, seemingly. They didn’t locate, they didn’t identify their relationship to the project, and in the absence of the location, they’d left so much room for assumptions. And, in fact, the reader might be duped into thinking the author was Indigenous. And, in this article, the person was saying some things that were actually problematic about the kind of project they were doing. The absence of their location led me to say that if you’re working on and in an Indigenous community, you have

to locate or else your research is unethical. And to me, that is like this nebulous space that academia creates when they say they want people to be at “an arm’s length,” and that gets reflected in the writing, whereas Indigenous research, it’s pretty much the polar opposite of that. The more you’re connected, the more you identify your relationships, the more we know what’s at stake in terms of your relational accountability ... so, when you have a relationship with people, and you are engaged with them, there are higher stakes for your ethics. Your accountability is closer to you, versus this “arm’s length” thing. It’s the “arm’s length” value, or an “arm’s length” approach, that in mainstream research makes it okay for searchers and authors to not have a relationship, not have accountability, and that’s been a big problem that we have articulated, that there has been no accountability for people to come and do whatever they want and take whatever they want.

Wilson brought up two additional elements that can further our understanding of this discussion. First, he pointed how some authors do not include their positionality because western research does not require it. Second, he pointed out that some researchers may have done their self-reflexive work but that journals’ editing norms may continue to uphold an aloof writing style. Wilson therefore pointed out that some journals that have not yet understood positionality to be an essential component of research are “killing the knowledge”:

I think that there’s a couple of problems: one problem is there’s a lot of researchers that actually don’t know what they’re doing. So, they just say they’re doing Indigenous research because they happen to be working in Indigenous contexts. So, they can speak, they can “talk the talk,” but they’re not necessarily living that in their everyday lives, which is all you need in western research. You don’t have to live according to western ideals in doing western research, so for them, it’s not a big deal. So, if you can say the right words, you

can sort of pretend you're doing Indigenous research. But the problem is, a lot of journals yet haven't caught up to what is good Indigenous research. So, they sort of demand a style of writing that is "disembodied." So, it may be that those researchers did a really good job, and if they had written for a different journal, or a different audience in mind, when they did the writing, it might be that it is really good. It's just that the demands of the journal, the writing kind of killed the knowledge.

Race-Shifting in Canadian Academic Circles.

When I inquired into the phenomenon of Indigenous identity theft, Lavallee pointed to the work of Darryl Leroux (2019) on race-shifting and self-Indigenization to explain this. Looking at Cherokee identity theft in the Eastern US, Circe Sturm coined the concept of "race-shifting" in her book *Becoming Indian* (2011). Leroux (2019) takes up this concept and looks at its manifestation in a Canadian context. Leroux's (2019) work studies "the shifting politics of whiteness" in Canada and analyzes what "leads white people to switch their identity claims and expand the boundaries of whiteness" (p. 4). This is exactly what the Indigenous researchers I spoke to were denouncing in this "age of reconciliation" (Leroux, 2019, p. 5). It is noteworthy to say that this phenomenon of race-shifting is not new. There is a long history of white Settlers adopting Indigenous identity, customs, and knowledge for their own benefit. P.J. Deloria and King have exposed this in *Playing Indian* (1998) and in *The Inconvenient Indian* (2013), respectively. These books discuss the historical context, in Canada and in the US, that led Indigenous identity to become fashionable and profitable. However, the issue at hand is more closely related to "ethnic fraud" as it is happening specifically within academic circles to access certain resources reserved for Indigenous researchers.

Ethnic fraud is explained by C.D. Pewewardy (2004) as “the inaccurate self-identification of race by persons applying for faculty positions at mainstream colleges and universities, or for admissions into special programs or for research consideration” (p. 202). Pewewardy (2004) states that these can be considered “*fraudulent* Indians” because these “are individuals who are consciously committing cultural theft” (p. 202). In the current context of a post-TRC Canada, identity theft is profitable because there are substantial funds available for Indigenous research projects. According to Leroux, there is also a revalorization of Indigeneity within institutions, which leads new positions only for Indigenous applicants to be opened.

Attempting to “steal” the space created for Indigenous scholars in the academy becomes a form of “cultural theft” because it is a way to “push the boundaries of whiteness and of white dominance” (Leroux, 2019, p. 220). Furthermore, this appropriation of Indigeneity has been committed in the recent past with relative impunity because it is grounded in the colonial belief that “white society can claim, appropriate, manipulate, or outright *own* Indigenous lifeways without consequence” (Leroux, 2019, p. 220). This statement was strongly echoed by Lee, who described this as a form of colonial “cannibalism”:

The other step is to realize that the Academy is a part of settler colonialism. And if we look at what settler colonialism does, in terms of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous identity, Indigenous presence, Indigenous land, is it really consumes it. We have to think about settler colonialism as a “cannibal.” It just wants to cannibalize Indigeneity, all forms of it: it wants to eat it, it wants to become it, it’s insatiable.

Race-shifting was identified by all the Indigenous scholars I spoke to, and each discussed a different aspect of it. First, Lavallee denounced how the omission of positionality in research is not solely accidental; it is also a way that one can slyly pretend to be Indigenous. This is usually

followed by an “act” of Indigeneity. She retold an incident that happened in her class that illustrates this:

There was a researcher one time, someone who asked if they could come to our classes to present their research. So, we all agreed that they could come in and they were supposed to just introduce it and then the students could participate or not outside of the classroom. He wasn't Indigenous, because I asked him, because he could present as Indigenous, but he said, "No, I'm not." But when he came to the class, he did an opening in the language. He has long hair. Everybody in that room thought he was Indigenous. He did not provide his social location and say, "I am not Indigenous." So, everybody gave him ample room to totally take over the class, and then someone came to me later and said, "Lynnn, he took up so much time, but I didn't want to interrupt him," and that's when I realized she thought he was Indigenous. I said, "He didn't identify as not being Indigenous?" and she said, "No." Same person came to a classroom I was teaching that were all Indigenous students; he identified as non-Indigenous right away. He knew that we would know. So, this is race-shifting as Leroux talks about.

This anecdote demonstrates the slipperiness of identity in academic contexts. A person can *present* stereotypical elements associated with an Indigenous identity (e.g., clothing and hair style), then use some cultural elements to make their presentation seem more authentic (e.g., opening in an Indigenous language), and then take advantage of a naïve audience. The same person, in another context, can revert to a non-Indigenous identity when faced with an Indigenous audience. Doing an opening prayer in an Indigenous language was, for Lavallee, a clear sign of cultural appropriation, which echoes her concerns that non-Indigenous researchers will use Indigenous languages for their own benefit. To continue with this example, this same person also used tobacco

as another marker of cultural authenticity, but this was also only trickery because this person did not really *know* anything about tobacco:

And then that same researcher that I'm talking about that came to the Indigenous class wanting to do research, he started to talk about his research, and he started to walk around the table; we were in a circle, and he had tobacco in his hand, and he just started giving it out. And people were like, "No" because he wasn't explaining it: "Why are you giving me this tobacco?"; "I can't accept this tobacco if I don't know what I'm accepting it for." Those people who had the knowledge of what tobacco meant, they laid into him after the fact: "You can't just walk around and just hand tobacco to us, that's a very personal interaction." So, that's an example of someone hearing something and thinking that this is a "pan-Indigenous" thing, and it's not.

Authenticity and Authority.

Another layer of the above-mentioned incident is that, in certain contexts, an Indigenous positionality can be associated with authenticity and authority. Certain researchers may therefore seek to Indigenize themselves because this confers a perceived authority and legitimacy to speak about Indigenous issues. Authorship is crucial in academic research, and distortion of identity, or "riding" on the assumptions of others, can confer a researcher a perceived *right* to speak about certain issues with credibility. This suspicion was confirmed by Lee when he said, *"I think our own positionalities actually shape what the university is willing to hear and what the university is willing to accept as legitimate knowledge production."*

In the process of decolonizing research, the knowledge of non-Indigenous "experts" is increasingly contested. This expertise is discredited because it is seen as a relic of a colonial system of knowledge production based on the exploitation of Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, in terms

of the construction of Indigeneity, anthropologists are seen as having fabricated a fixed and misleading concept of Indigenous identity relying on “obsolete anthropological notions and a romantic and false ethnographic vision” (Kuper, 2005, p. 218 as cited in Searles, 2008, p.239). These are the negative associations that every non-Indigenous researcher carries when they first enter the field of Indigenous research. This may create a conundrum for some non-Indigenous researchers, and they may ask, “How do I maintain or establish my authority on these issues if I am not Indigenous?” Based on everything that has been said before, the “right” answer to this question is “through *relationships*,” but this requires time and energy and might seem like a long detour for some researchers. Manipulating one’s image, one’s language, to play the role of being Indigenous is far easier, especially considering that they are dealing mostly with other white academics and with non-Indigenous audiences. Tactics of deceit work because they rely on stereotypical ideas about what constitutes an “authentic” Indigenous identity, and these are prevalent even in academic circles. This romanticized construction of Indigeneity is a western construction (King, 2013), so it is no wonder it works well in western circles.

It is noteworthy to say that this stereotypical construction of Indigeneity is so deeply engrained in our society that Indigenous authors have often shared (King, 2013; Wagamese, 2008) how they have *internalized* these notions of Indigeneity and struggled all their lives to get rid of them. In his memoirs, Richard Wagamese (2008) retells an episode in his life in which he was confronted with his own *show* of authenticity. In the chapter, “The Birth and Death of Super Injun,” he explains how in his 20s, he became a reporter for the *New Breed*, a Native magazine. In this new job, he was trying hard to be the best possible Native political reporter, as this was also a way for him of “becoming Indian” (p. 131). In hindsight, he explains how “politics do not nurture identity because rhetoric is not teaching” (p. 131). In his quest for authenticity and authorship, he

says, “I craved so much to present myself as a native person” that “I lost sight of what was real” (p. 131). Wagamese was adopted out of his Indigenous family at the age of four, so identity and authenticity have been life-long quests, and, most of all, he craved public recognition as a Native author. He explained how in his internalized stereotypical notion of Indigeneity, presenting as “Indian” included being “irritatingly vocal” and dressing like a “real Injun” (p. 131). But, at its height, this show of Indianness was called out by an Elder:

I had it all wrong, he said. He pointed to my beaded vest, moccasins, long hair, and turquoise rings. Then he pointed to my heart. “You want to be the ultimate Indian,” he said. “But you have to start from inside.” He went on to tell me that I had been created in a specific order. I was created to be first a human being, then a male, then an Ojibway Indian. ... By trying to be the ultimate Indian, I was missing the most important part of the journey, the human part. ... I gave up trying to be Super Injun that day. (p. 132)

This is a powerful lesson, and it was a teaching moment for Wagamese. The “talk” and the “dress” are but the outer shell of Indigeneity, and if there is no knowledge, it remains empty. Simply claiming an Indigenous identity cannot lead to authenticity or authority because the stereotypical and historical construction of Indigenous identity is a western construction. However, when Indigenous identity seeks out nourishment and meaning from its own roots, its knowledge systems, then it can rebuild itself without the need for an outer show.

Indigenous Identity in Canada: A Colonial Construction.

The question of Indigenous identity in Canada is so contentious and so central to the topic of Indigenous research that it is worthwhile to look more closely at its origins. In her essay on “Indigenous Identity, ‘authenticity’ and the structural violence of settler colonialism,” Maddison (2013) explains how structural violence in settler colonialism “concerns the regulation of

Indigenous identity” (p. 289). Before colonization, the terms “Aboriginal” or “Indigenous” did not exist, so “there was no ‘Indigeneity’ or ‘Aboriginality’ in the sense that there is today” (p. 289). The concept of “Indigenusness,” hence, is deeply tied to the regulation and control of Indigenous peoples by colonial authorities. The naming process is, for Maddison (2013), a “powerful technology” to rule over and “contain the original inhabitants of the colonized territory” (p. 290). In practice, a racist and colonial worldview created a rigid “racialized” Indigenous identity based on “degrees of blood” (p. 290). Concurrently to this process of containing and naming the “Indian problem,” policies were put in place to erase this cumbersome identity: “policies of child removal and assimilation were explicitly intended to *erase* the Indigenous presence into invisibility within the colonial population” (p. 290). Consequently, the question of Indigenous identity today must be conceptualized within the Indigenous struggle “to regain the right to name themselves and reclaim their political identities” (p. 290). Indigenous peoples today are also, in response to rigid ideas of identity as “blood quantum,” reclaiming *community* as the main marker of identity and, therefore, re-turning to a more fluid Indigenous notion of identity.

Fluid Indigenous Ideas of Identity.

I would like to use the specific case of Inuit identity construction to discuss what a more fluid and complex notion of Indigenous identity might look like. In “Inuit Identity in the Canadian Arctic,” Searles (2008) compares rigid colonial notions of “blood and soil” as determinants of identity to how Inuit *themselves* define Inuit identity (p. 240). This does not mean that blood does not count, as Inuit identity is inherited from parents biologically, but, interestingly, blood is not enough. For Inuit identity to be complete, “soul” must be added to blood: “Inuit inherit some of their identity through soul substance attached to Inuit names” (p. 240). Additionally, Inuit identity must constantly be “nourished”; it is not fixed once and for all but keeps growing and developing

throughout a person's life. What nourishes Inuit identity are certain places (outpost camps), certain foods (traditional raw seal meat), and certain activities (seal hunting). Therefore, "identity is derived through genealogical ties and through other factors, such as the practice and acquisition of traditional knowledge" (p. 241). When worldview and knowledge are intrinsically tied to identity, we return to the idea that a relationship with traditional knowledge is primordial for an Indigenous identity.

Additionally, traditional Inuit identity is also a lived social identity that makes sense within a network of relationships with other Inuit. So, a crucial aspect of this social identity is "co-operation as defined by traditional rules," which leads Searles (2008) to quote an Elder who said that "one becomes Inupiat not through birth but through a relatedness that involves numerous obligations and responsibilities" (p. 242). Inuit identity is therefore flexible to the point that some Inuit claim that "it is possible to turn a *tanik* (white person) into an Inupiaq (a real Inuit person) by letting him work with you" (p. 242).

Finally, there is also the spiritual element that confirms Inuit identity; this is the "soul name" that joins a child to a family and a community, and this too can be given to a child who is non-Inuit by birth:

Name-souls have the capacity to transcend this boundary. One two-year-old girl of white parents in Iqaluit, who had no Inuit kin, was named *Aksujuleak*, a name that belonged to an elderly Inuit man who died a year prior to her birth. The adult children that were close friends of the parents called the little girl "*ataata*" (father) and gave her the same love and affection they gave their father. (Searles, 2008, p. 243)

Unfortunately, Inuit identity has become increasingly rigid through the "legalization of identity that occurred with the passage of Nunavut Land Claims Settlement Agreement" (Searles, 2008, p.

244). This means that people who have some Inuit blood but who are not culturally identified as Inuit are entitled to claim beneficiary status under one of the four land claims. This political situation has led to all sorts of identity manipulations in the hope of benefiting from the Land Claims agreement. Some people with Inuit ancestry but without strong ties to communities and to traditional knowledge are “referring to themselves not as Inuit but as Canadians with Inuit descent – a process of prying apart cultural and ethnic identity” (Searles, 2008, p. 244). Committees have even been put in place to evaluate the authenticity of the Inuit identity of the applicants. Searles (2008) explains how an applicant seeking to be enrolled got rejected by the committee because “she lived outside of Nunavut for a long time, and she had not maintained regular contact with family members living in the community she was seeking to be enrolled in” (p. 244).

In sum, Inuit identity is in flux. It is an evolving identity that is “an attribute that is achieved rather than ascribed” (Searles, 2008, p. 252). What the Inuit example demonstrates is that an Indigenous identity requires work and requires accountability to communities. So, there are “principles of inheritance,” and there are “principles of performance” (Searles, 2008, p. 244), which means that there are things to *do* in terms of identity, like “*sitting on the land by yourself*,” as Wilson Danard stated.

Turning back to ethnic fraud in academic circles, based on my conversations with Indigenous scholars, this appropriation has been done mainly through “principles of inheritance” (the long-lost Indigenous relative three generations removed) and through appearance. If it were done purely through principles of relationship, then it would *not* be fraudulent. As an adopted Anishinaabe scholar, Lee embodies this principle of relationality and of community performance. It is by participating in relationships, by following the obligations and responsibilities set by his community, that he has acquired the authority and right to discuss Indigenous knowledge.

Conclusion

As a way of enacting the recommendations of the TRC (2015), research agencies have put forward funding for Indigenous research, and, in the same spirit, higher education institutions have opened positions only for Indigenous applicants. Considering this generalized move to reconciliation, some researchers want a piece of the cake, so to speak, and have turned to deceitful tactics to access those resources. In response to this, institutions have started to police Indigenous identity and require certification letters. This might seem like an appropriate response, but in many regards, it is still rigid because, as stated by Indigenous scholars themselves, the question of who can do Indigenous research is not simply a matter of “if you are Indigenous, you can, and if you are not, you can’t” (Kovach, 2017). What needs to be considered first and foremost, beyond blood and status, is relationality and the *positionality* of a person within Indigenous communities and Indigenous knowledge systems. In this era of reconciliation, hiring only “real” Indigenous faculty can become a form of tokenism. As was discussed in the last chapter, some institutions eagerly put “their” Indigenous faculty under the spotlight. We can ask ourselves whether this is not simply another way of displaying Indigeneity without doing the deep structural unlearning needed to unpack colonialism in academic institutions.

Chapter 5: The Evolution of Indigenous Research within Academic Milieux

Introduction

This chapter presents the evolution of the relationship between Indigenous researchers and western education institutions over the last 10 years in Canada. It looks chronologically at the growth and expansion of Indigenous research and, therefore, incorporates themes previously discussed, including relationship and positionality, but also adds new subthemes, such as the “protection of Indigenous knowledge.”

The “Enviro-Academic Context”

This chapter will be structured following the sixth element in the “Petal Flower” framework: the “enviro-academic context” (Absolon, 2011, p. 140–163). The academic context or environment is a determining factor in research, which is “affected by its environment and similarly, Indigenous re-searchers are affected by our environment in the academy” (Absolon, 2011, p. 140). The academic environment can be either hostile or supportive of Indigenous researchers and ways of doing research. Absolon (2011) identifies two main components of this environment: the limiting elements that hinder the development of Indigenous research and the helpful elements that support its growth. These components will be used to break down how Indigenous research has evolved over the last decade or so. This framework also underlines how the western academic context is a mix of both positive and negative factors and, therefore, is always in flux.

In her discussion of the enviro-academic context, Absolon (2011) identifies “Gatekeepers” and “Fences” as the main limiting factors to the expansion of Indigenous research in the academy (p. 140).

Gatekeepers are traditional academics who want to uphold the “old order” because they have “become aggravated, irritated and annoyed” by Indigenous methodologies (p. 140). Fences are the obstacles erected by these Gatekeepers as they “vigilantly stand guard to maintain the power and privilege of *who* can know and of *how* this knowledge comes to be” (p. 140). “Fences” are therefore structural, institutional, and even intellectual or theoretical barriers that, when enforced, “create obstacles and challenges” for Indigenous researchers (p. 141). Overcoming these obstacles is one of the major struggles for Indigenous researchers, as they must learn to become “hoop dancers” jumping “through bureaucratic hoops that defend colonial education” (p. 141).

The next constraining element in this environment that Absolon (2011) pinpoints is the paradox of putting in written form ancestral oral knowledge. She names this dilemma “Writing Oral Traditions and Other Ironies” (p. 152–163). This paradox is central and multilayered; it is foremost related to the very nature of the western enviro-academic context, where there is a systematic push to constantly publish new findings. For Sweeney Windchief (2020), this is because research is part of the “western colonial capitalist system” and, as such, follows the same rules:

In academia, there seems to be an incentive to produce scholarship at a rate that mirrors the extraction of natural resources for public consumption, beyond what is needed for sustenance. This happens in an economy of grant awards, peer-reviewed journal articles, and presentations in prestigious academic conferences. (p. 60)

Moreover, this pressure to constantly produce “new” knowledge is contrary to the principle of relationality that guides Indigenous research. Indeed, this “incentive to produce” undermines relationship building, trust, and reciprocity as it encourages accelerated “helicopter research” (Windchief, 2020, p. 61). Consequently, this paradox also ties in with the issue of representation of Indigenous knowledge in publications. If Indigenous knowledge corresponds to an oral and

embodied way of knowing, then how does one avoid “the commercialization and misappropriation of knowledge held and protected by a community” (Windchief, 2020, p. 59) during publication?

This issue raises the question, “How can Indigenous scholars write about their epistemologies and not over-disclose knowledge so that it is easily appropriated?” This tension came up repeatedly during my conversations with Indigenous scholars, and they framed the questions that encompass this issue in the following way: “How do we write from an Indigenous position about Indigenous knowledge in a way that preserves and protects it from misappropriation when we are mostly writing for a non-Indigenous audience?” Furthermore, this query also necessitates questioning the whole academic writing process: “How do we write about Indigenous knowledge systems within an academic context without ‘white washing’ them in the process?”

In terms of the positive components of the “enviro-academic context,” Absolon (2011) identifies “Allied Theories” and “Allied Committees” (p. 148–153); these constitute the academic support necessary for Indigenous research and students to develop in the academy. To thrive, Indigenous graduate students require the invaluable support of Indigenous faculty members through mentorship, but when that is not possible, non-Indigenous allies can “play a paramount role” and offer a support that is “not to be underestimated” (p. 150). Allies are important because they have done their own decolonizing process, and, as Absolon (2011) explains, “we must work with allied academics who understand colonialism and who can help keep colonizing methods out of our search” (p. 150). Allies play an active role in creating a space for Indigenous research to exist in academic institutions, as their presence “opens doorways and windows to create methodological space so Indigenous researchers can do their work” (p. 151).

Putting Things in Perspective: 2011–2021

Absolon wrote her book between 2009 and 2010, and although she identified some positive elements, the enviro-academic context was, for the most part, experienced as a hostile environment in which Indigenous researchers were “struggling and persevering to do re-search projects in the absence of cultural mirrors, Indigenous content, Indigenous curriculum, and Indigenous mentors” (p. 143). Reading this today, one may wonder whether this is still the case. With the publication of the TRC (2015) and the generalized impetus to “reconcile,” we could assume that academic environments across Canada have changed for the better. Additionally, we have recently seen a noticeable increase in the number of multidisciplinary research projects that use the “label” of Indigenous research, which could signal that the situation of Indigenous researchers has improved. However, beneath this shiny surface, are all the Gatekeepers that Absolon speaks of really gone? Or are they simply less outspoken but still erecting fences, even if these are less tall and less hard to circumvent? Finally, “Allied Theories” and “Allied Committees” seem, at first glance, to have multiplied in all directions, but are all these allies truly disinterested, or are some of them opportunistically stretching out their hands to Indigenous partners for their own benefit?

Following loosely the structure of Absolon’s (2011) chapter on enviro-academic context, I first present and discuss the perspectives of Indigenous researchers on the academic context as a site of struggle. This will answer the question, “How has the enviro-academic context evolved, and where are Indigenous Studies heading?”

Second, looking at the limiting factors, I ask whether non-Indigenous Gatekeepers are still firmly in place. Are they still making sure, in 2021, that “you play by *their* rules—all the while reminding you what a privilege it is to be in the academy attaining *their* degrees” (Absolon, 2011, p. 144)?

Third, are the allies of 2021 the same as those identified in 2011? Or do we see the emergence of a new “breed” of allies in the landscape of Indigenous research? How has the role and nature of allyship changed in recent years as more and more Indigenous scholars are making their own place in academic institutions?

Fourth, I discuss in depth the paradox of writing oral traditions. This subtheme will include a discussion of the strategies that Indigenous scholars have developed to not over-disclose knowledge, as well as what it means to protect Indigenous knowledge in the enviro-academic context.

To conclude this chapter, I discuss what the future of Indigenous research holds in store: is it bright or bleak? What are some predictions of Indigenous researchers?

The Academic Environment: A “Site of Struggle”?

Wilson (2008) and Absolon (2011) write that, at the time, Indigenous methodologies were heavily contested and criticized in universities. They emphasize that Indigenous research was not completely accepted as a valid research approach and, therefore, had to struggle to make its place in the academy. In our conversations, Wilson and Absolon concurred with the findings of the scoping review: Indigenous research has gained considerable recognition in the past few years as a valid research approach. They also pointed out that there are more and more young Indigenous researchers pushing this expansion and doing Indigenous research in their communities from their own land-based cultural perspectives. The result is a significant increase in the number of Indigenous scholars in universities, which signals that a larger space has been created in the academy for Indigenous ways of knowing and doing research. Furthermore, since the TRC (2015), universities have added reconciliation to their agenda and to their strategic plans and have created

positions for Indigenous scholars only in departments that historically never included Indigenous perspectives or expertise (such as philosophy).

Nonetheless, the recognition by academics and institutions of Indigenous research as a valid *alternative* research approach is not a linear process, nor is it evenly spread out across disciplines and academic milieux. Wilson and Absolon pointed out that certain disciplines are allies; they have been doing their own decolonizing work and, therefore, have created space for Indigenous researchers. Other disciplines, especially within the so-called hard sciences, still regard positivism and objectivity as the golden rule. In these fields, Indigenous research is still seen as less rigorous, and the need to build relationships is not understood as a necessary part of the research process. For these reasons, both Wilson and Absolon signalled that some institutions have evolved in terms of their mentality and regard for Indigenous knowledge systems and others have not.

Indigenous scholars also noted the systematization of Indigenous research: it has become less intuitive and more standardized in its methods and protocols and, therefore, has gained a greater degree of recognition. However, as this appreciation has not developed everywhere equally, we cannot definitively assert that the academic environment is no longer a site of struggle. In many institutions, Indigenous research is highly regarded and encouraged, while in others, it remains marginal and contested. According to Wilson, the determining factor is the number of people already doing this type of research in any given institution because this changes the status of Indigenous research from alternative or marginal to normal and mainstream:

In some universities where there is a critical mass of people that are doing this type of research, it's really accepted. And I think those are the places where things really move forward quickly. Because, like the university where I'm working, you don't waste your time

in your thesis justifying why you're doing Indigenous research or justifying it by saying "it's similar to western research in this way." But instead, you say, you're just doing Indigenous research, and then you justify it from your own community perspective and develop it into your cultural context. So, in those areas where it is accepted, I think it can move really fast. But in other areas where it's not as accepted, then students have to waste a lot of time. It's like, if you were a student of western science and every time you did something, you had to justify why a western scientific approach is the right one, and you waste all your thesis on that.

For Absolon, the struggle to make Indigeneity visible is still current because it goes beyond Indigenous research, but she admitted that some things have been gained in recent years:

We have had to weed through the thick of colonial knowledge, colonial theories, colonial methods, many of which were expropriating Indigenous knowledge systems ... [In my book] I distinguished "research" without a hyphen as being western dominated research, and then "re-search" is what we are doing. Conscious searchers are doing their searching again with Spirit, with heart, with a critical consciousness, with a critical intelligence and finding different pathways to embody that, it is what they are doing. And so today, in the last 15 years since I worked on Kaandossiwin, you're absolutely right, there has been this emergence and growth of Indigenous searchers also asserting, and the people that I've worked with over time have felt affirmed, like the pathway has been established to Indigenous peoples, restoring, reclaiming how we come to know in a way that is meaningful to our knowledge systems, to our nations, to our communities, to our family, and that's really important, that's really important.

For Absolon, Indigenous research is about reclaiming identity, reframing history, and healing through research. Therefore, one could say that the struggle will never be over:

When I wrote Kaandossiwin, I think that still carries forward today, the need to assert and the need to affirm and to bring forward that re-searching. For Indigenous peoples[re-search] is and has always been here, this is not new for us. What's different is that we are re-writing it, and re-storying it, and re-storing how we come to know and reframing it in a meaningful way for us. And so, when I wrote Kaandossiwin, it was very much in a definitive stance of affirming and asserting that place from which we come to know.

On another note, Green, Director of the School of Social Work at University of Victoria for over a decade, painted an interesting picture of this struggle for visibility and legitimacy from the inside of an institution. In *Reclaiming Haisla Ways* (2008), Green states that Indigenous knowledge should be included more in the academy because it disrupts Eurocentric ways of doing research. In that article, she agrees with Absolon in saying that traditional scholars must give up some of their control to allow Indigenous epistemologies to exist in the academy. In our conversation, I asked her if this was still her position or if she had seen significant enough changes in the last 13 years as director to make her change her mind:

At the time, when I was writing it [2008 article], there was a conversation around how do we decolonize the institute? There were different Commissions around Indigenous education and recruiting Indigenous students. If the government and the institute are saying this, what are we actually doing to make this happen? Well, you need to create programs. Part of my call was to say, "Create a system for applying to the university that will enable Indigenous students to apply," make it accessible; how do you get that message across? What do you need to do, institutionally, to change the way you create admissions

for Indigenous communities? How would you reach out to a rural community? How would you support students who travel from remote isolated communities and move to the city? And then, once you get the students here, what can the institute do to support the students to stay? Because it's one thing to get students: it's another thing student support, advocacy, all of that.

Green underlined that when the time came to create institutional change, there was an important conjuncture of the political will to address Indigenous issues coming from the Commission Indigenous Education Program, and the institutional will to implement these recommendations, but most importantly, the presence of Indigenous faculty was the driving force behind the institutional reforms. As a result, 13 years later, Green affirmed that the system has been reformed at University of Victoria and that significant space has been created for Indigenous students to thrive and for Indigenous research to expand:

I'm happy to say that at UVic, we have a First People's house now designed like a long house. So, it's relevant to the local territory that the university sits on. And our staff has grown; I think the last count was 63 Indigenous faculty at UVic, and the staff, I believe, it's in the 300 range. That seems high, but that seems to stay in my mind. So, we have folks who are hired into doing recruitment; we have staff that are there to provide support to students. Sometimes they need help with rent; sometimes there's a death in the family, so, we have people to support them to be able to return home and come back and not lose their spot in a course because it can be very rigid academically. In terms of the faculty that I belong to, we've done two years of what we've termed "decolonial equity admissions," where we focus on the personal statement of the applicant opposed to what we've always focused on, who has the highest GPA? And so that was a lot of work. So yes, I think that

we've created the space to do that. And a lot of our programs now have an Indigenous course as a core course for all students to take. It is a token, I guess in some sense, but at the same time, at least, they get a course to have some sort of understanding; and there's some land based experiential learning. That is a big part of what we do here. So, I think, we've come a long way. And it's not something where we have to every year get permission for, every year have to find funding. It's an established part of our program delivery.

This testimony ties in with Wilson's statement regarding some institutions being places where “*things can move really fast*”; despite this, some institutions might still have faculty who are resistant to this movement to Indigenize the academy. As space has opened up for Indigenous faculty and students within many institutions, what then of the Gatekeepers and the Fences (Absolon, 2011) – how have they evolved?

Are “Gatekeepers” and “Fences” Still Firmly in Place?

In my conversations with Indigenous researchers, no one identified specific people who are still openly playing this Gatekeeper role. The presence of overt Gatekeepers was not their experience in the institutions in which they have chosen to do their careers, but this does not mean that they do not exist. What was pointed out to me was that, in recent years, the expertise of non-Indigenous scholars on Indigenous peoples and /issues has been scrutinized and even openly contested. Traditional anthropologists, biologists, or geographers who used to be parachuted into communities and who conducted research without fully disclosing it to participants are no longer accepted. So, if the mentality of some individual researchers has not evolved, Indigenous communities' demands, and expectations of research certainly have. Indigenous researchers said that relational accountability is more often expected, and Indigenous peoples are holding researchers in check.

However, progress is not linear. Although the expertise of certain researchers is now scrutinized, colonial ways of doing research are not a thing of the past. Lee and Lavallee pointed out that there are still many “experts” in Indigenous Studies who use outdated pan-Indigenist frameworks. Lee stated that there might even be a resurgence of this phenomenon because the current political climate in Canada has pushed to Indigenize the academy at any cost. This political agenda to Indigenize has encouraged many people to do so rashly, which has in many ways backfired:

In my mind, the biggest threat to Indigenous Studies right now is “Indigenization.”

I haven’t said that publicly yet. But I’ve been thinking about saying it in some way.

I would say, an expression of settler colonialism is where everybody is an “expert” on Indigenous issues. You can have a PhD in chemistry or something like that, and if your university is invested in “Indigenization” and wants you to teach an Indigenous Studies–focused course or bring in some sort of Indigenous knowledge into your course content, then suddenly you’re an “expert” and you can do that and you don’t need the Indigenous Studies scholars around to assist you because of academic freedom.

So, would that happen with chemistry or psychology? Could I teach that stuff now?

No. I wouldn’t even dare to. I’d get laughed out of the building. But for some reason, it’s seen as okay to become an “expert” in or at least a practitioner of Indigenous Studies–based knowledges without having to do any training in it. So, the default is this “pan-Indigenous” thing where, if you’re in astronomy, you start pulling together anybody who’s willing to talk about stars, from an Indigenous point of view, and the best you’re ever going to get is a pan-Indigenous approach in that context.

To add to this, Lavallee did point out that non-Indigenous researchers could do good Indigenous research if they were willing to learn from community partners and not behave as “experts”:

Perhaps it can be done in a good way, and there will be that learning, but oftentimes, then that researcher becomes “the Indigenous expert.” So, the non-Indigenous researcher becomes the “Indigenous expert,” and that’s really, really problematic.

Moreover, for Rowe, the problem lies not only in the “academic expertise” of a researcher but also in the asymmetrical power dynamics that this creates on the field:

But at the same time, there’s a trust and power dynamics that are also happening because people hold themselves as “experts,” and sometimes that’s seen, as, “Well, they are the expert.” And so, there’s a little bit of that, that sometimes also happens in community. So, I think sometimes communities have had bad experiences with these researchers.

Therefore, the question of positionality comes back to the forefront: “Who is doing Indigenous research?” and “Who is teaching Indigenous knowledge?” The irony remains that many institutions still do not see the problem with everyone becoming an “expert” in Indigenous Studies. Indeed, when Indigenization or decolonization are done in a haphazard way, without the guidance of Indigenous scholars, then, paradoxically, it does exactly the opposite: it perpetuates colonial ways. Wilson Danard also echoed this concern as she considered what she can teach as an Indigenous scholar:

Can I teach Black Studies? Does it work like that? Because there are still so many non-Indigenous people teaching our things. Can I do that too? Will I be accepted? Why is it only interchangeable with Indigenous Studies and worldviews? So, this job that I am applying to, not only do I have to have a PhD but now I have to know all this other stuff, I have to know all the different IMs [Indigenous Methods]; I have to know “Two-Eyed-

Seeing,” and traditional knowledge and cultural literacies ... so what does that mean? It’s so hard ... because some white person could be more qualified than me to teach it.

To nuance this critique by Wilson Danard, some institutions are paying more attention to their hiring policies and are reserving some key teaching positions to Indigenous scholars. This might seem ludicrous to some academics who see this as an infringement on their academic freedom, but again, this has to be put within the larger context of colonialism and of western research on Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, due to race-shifting tactics, stricter policies have been put into place to support the entry of “real” Indigenous people into the academy (those with community credentials and connections, not just long-lost ancestors). Considering the sheer number of faculty members in any institution, this might seem like tokenism, as Green mentioned, but this is still a valid means to create space for Indigenous faculty.

However, if the measures put in place by well-intended institutions to hire more Indigenous people become too rigid and fail to consider case-by-case specificities, then they too will betray the principles of Indigenous research. Indigenous research and Indigenous studies cannot become racialized as a field. Indigenous research is nonessentialist; it relies on positionality and relationality. Therefore, if a non-Indigenous researcher has built those relationships and is accountable to community, then that should carry more weight than “status.”

In sum, even if there are remnants of colonial ways of doing research among certain “experts,” most of the testimonies from Indigenous researchers concur that the “expert” attitude is more and more openly contested. Despite some researchers riding the wave of Indigenization in their institutions, on the field, Indigenous organizations are closely examining the research projects in which they want to participate and are no longer accepting extractive research but only research that benefits them.

Allies

In response to the limiting factors, I now discuss the role of allies and how it, too, has evolved over the last ten years. Allies are connected to Gatekeepers because they counterbalance each other. As the mass of allies increases, the relative power of Gatekeepers decreases. Reflecting on the evolution of Indigenous research, Wilson explained that with its recognition, a new mass of mostly non-Indigenous allies has flocked to Indigenous research. In this way, for him, Indigenous research is no longer a field of research *only* for Indigenous peoples; it has grown into a multi-ethnic space. Therefore, Wilson prefers to use the term “*Indigenist*” research, as it more accurately depicts this field of research today:

I call it “Indigenist research” now, instead of “Indigenous Research,” And I think it is just because there’s more and more people that have started writing about it. It has become a substantive theory in its own right. And it’s not just for Indigenous people. So that’s why I always make the analogy – it’s kind of like feminism. I am not a woman, but I’m still a feminist. You don’t have to be female to be a feminist. It’s just a set of ideals that you try to follow in how you do your research but also in how you live your life. So, the same thing goes with Indigenist research; you don’t have to be Indigenous. Everyone is Indigenous from somewhere, really, so it’s not about your racial background; it’s more about the philosophy and the beliefs that you’re trying to follow in your research and in your everyday life.

Wilson identifies as allies all those who have gathered around “Indigenist research” and who, most importantly, follow the principles of Indigenous research, such as relationality, respect, reciprocity, and accountability, in their own lives. To return to the allies identified by Absolon (2011), we can safely say that in 2021, this group has grown. Today, they still include committee

members and non-Indigenous mentors who support Indigenous students, but they are more numerous and are found in more departments. Green specifically shared the importance of such allies and the “relational work” they do, as she remembers her first mentor:

I think that the relational work is really significant for me; it's really important. My very first mentor was Gary Dumbrill. He's a professor at McMaster University. He was with us for three years at UVic; he's British, he's a white guy, and everything about who he is, is whiteness. Him and I met, and he mentored me, and we did collaborative research. We co-wrote a lot of articles together, we co-presented at conferences, we co-developed courses. And he's a big part of my growth as a scholar. I'm saying it's about relational work. I think I gravitated towards him because I felt the leadership that he had to offer. I felt the genuineness. And he asked me tough questions; he would ask me questions around status cards or the reserve and all of that. We had those kinds of conversations.

I personally don't believe that it's [Indigenous research] exclusionary. I think that if we meet together, we do the work together. I know a lot of scholars who aren't Indigenous, but once I meet them, okay, I could have sworn you were Indigenous, just the way you write and how you carry yourself. I'm not saying that to be exclusionary, but the kind of work that is done and how you carry yourself in the work, I think that makes the biggest difference.

Green was, like Wilson, underlining how Indigenous research is not exclusive or exclusionary but does require “relational work.” For Green, this is apparent in the way such allies carry themselves. This is not a statement about allies *pretending* to be Indigenous but rather about how, as Wilson said, they are living by the principles of Indigenous research.

Moreover, Absolon (2011) declares that the greatest difficulty Indigenous students faced when they entered academic institutions was not only the lack of Indigenous mentors but also the absence of Indigenous content and programs, support, and an understanding of Indigenous realities (e.g., living in remote communities). In this regard, too, we can see how the situation has evolved in certain institutions, and again, this can be linked to the work of allies but in different positions. Green gave some concrete examples, from the University of Victoria, of what administrative allies can do to change the relationship between institutions and Indigenous peoples. Allies in powerful positions did not seem to be so present 10 or 15 years ago, and they are a considerable advancement:

We have a new President who just started this year, and as a faculty member, I've been here for 21 years, this is the first time that we, as directors, have been invited by the President to talk about leadership. He was there with us; it was not a forum where all the UVic chairs were there, but it was just all the Indigenous scholars who met with the President. He's doing that quite regularly. So that's huge. His name is Kevin Hall. He's incredible. I mean, the other presidents were great. But for me, I guess the difference with this President is that he's actually sitting with us and conversing with us. Making it a part of his leadership. I think it's necessary in doing this work when your dean is supportive of it. I think that if we didn't have any of that, we probably wouldn't have been able to move this forward.

Lastly, allies must “walk the walk”; they have to do work that directly benefits Indigenous communities. In this regard, for Lavallee, the way funding money is spent is a direct measure of genuine allyship:

I think that people can bring community in in a good way. Don't get me wrong. But I think that in order to do that, where's the money going? So truly, if you do community-based research – now we're talking about CBR [community based research], not just Indigenous research – if you're truly doing community-based research, where is the funding going? Would a researcher who's working with an Indigenous community be willing that the money flow through the Indigenous agency or organization? And oftentimes they won't, because they need that for their career; they need to demonstrate that the funding is going to their institution.

Green illustrated this “walking the walk” form of allyship in the following example of one of her former students, which also shows the importance of Indigenous mentors:

I have a former student who graduated with a master's degree, a young white man, and he came to our school from living in Saskatchewan. He was mentored by an Elder there, and they took him to Sundance. And so, he was introduced to ceremony. And then he came to Victoria, and we made the connection. And he just grew into himself. He does mental health work. So that was his key area. And I often invited him back into my class to do presentations, because sometimes people don't know how to do this work as an ally, or as a white person; they have questions around it.

One of my favorite experiences that he shared is after he graduated from UVic, he got a job with the ministry [Child Services] in Newfoundland. And one of the first things he did was, he went and introduced himself to the local Indigenous communities or to any Indigenous organizations that were in the area and just said, “I'm working for the ministry; I'll probably have communications with you, or I'll see you due to the nature of my job.” And so, he made that connection.

In the ministry, you have to go through a probation period. And when his probation was up the ministry didn't want to renew him. They didn't feel that he was doing the child protection work that they hired him to do. And all the people that he built those relationships with occupied the ministry office so that they would hire him, and he got hired! I think we can all do this work; this is what I'm trying to say. I think that identity and relationship go hand in hand with each other. I think this work is important for all of us to do.

This telling example underlines that the work of allyship is not about “helping out” Indigenous peoples, but it is “*important work for all of us to do.*” This nuance can be tied to the concept of ethical relationality developed by Donald (2013), which explicitly advocates for creating new Indigenous–non-Indigenous relationships in Canada based on the ethical principles of respect and accountability:

It has become clear to me that we need a new story to help us eschew colonial frontier logics of the fort and renew Aboriginal–Canadian relations on more ethical terms. Such a story would be inspired by the treaties, which teach that we are called to work together in ways that bring benefits to all people who live on the land together. These teachings place emphasis on learning from each other in balanced ways and sharing the wisdom that comes from working together in the spirit of good relations. (p. 28)

Protecting Indigenous Knowledge from Distortion

One of the main concerns of Indigenous scholars was that Indigenous knowledge presented in research remains integral and true to its sources. The difficulty, then, is disseminating knowledge in a written form when it was originally transmitted orally, while simultaneously not giving away its essence or exposing it to appropriation. This central concern comes from a colonial

history of knowledge appropriation. Indigenous researchers, therefore, want to do two things: reclaim Indigenous epistemologies and make them visible while also protecting them from manipulation.

This thorny issue of knowledge appropriation is illustrated in the following example given by Lavallee. This anecdote reinforces why Indigenous researchers are so concerned with accountability and relationality:

Vern Harper was my Elder for almost two decades. I remember someone did their master's thesis and they wrote about their experiences in Vern Harper's lodge, and then I went to him and said, "Vern, I found this master's thesis, and this person wrote about what was happening in the lodge." And then he said, "I remember him coming."

Some people come to our ceremony to "harvest" our knowledge, and they use it. And then that's copyright, that master's thesis is copyright, and that researcher owns that knowledge now.

The problem with this research is not that the graduate student attended the Sweat Lodge ceremony but rather that he failed to ask permission to write about it. He also failed to recognize that the knowledge contained in that ceremony, even though he had experienced it first-hand, was not his to divulge.

In response to this mining approach to Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous researchers discussed with me different strategies used to limit appropriation. For example, in her doctoral thesis, Wilson Danard opted to disclose less "Medicine" to preserve the integrity of the Indigenous knowledge presented in her thesis:

[In my thesis] I took Medicine out because there were teachings that I took out of there because I didn't want them to be taken. I didn't want them to be manipulated or cited to

support somebody else's work. And I don't mean another Indigenous person, I mean another academic ... some people can use anything ... I don't want the teachings to get distorted. So, the only Medicine I left in was those Medicines I engaged with because I've been working with those Medicines and most of that stuff you could get off the Internet anyway. There was a lot of Medicine that I didn't add because I felt that people can't be responsible with this, and second, somebody might take that Medicine and do this whole other thing ... just taking it.

Similarly, in his own research, Lee chose to reveal less and, like Wilson Danard, used only previously published material. Moreover, Lee specified that this not only protects the Indigenous knowledge he conducted research on but it also protects the research participants who might be tempted to “tell a good story” to a researcher:

We're navigating a very tricky situation right now with a project I'm working on with a few Anishinaabe artists and we're basically creating a video about parts of the Great Anishinaabe Flood story. And we are being very careful; we are not telling any part of that story that hasn't already been put in print. In order to protect the knowledge, we're just relying on what's already printed, and it's been printed by people who were recognized knowledge holders in the 70s and 80s. So, we're not bringing out any other interpretations, we're not asking other knowledge holders for that story, we're just using those parts, because for whatever reason, they decided to print them. And it protects the knowledge, but it also protects the people involved because then we don't get taken to task for giving away the secrets, and often the pathway to hell is paved with good intentions. And so why not give away all the family secrets – “I just wanted to tell a good story” – and next thing

you know, this big important piece of knowledge is out there that we had no authority to share.

This strategy of saying less and protecting sources from overexposure might seem contrary to the spirit of academic research, which seeks to constantly “discover” new and previously unpublished material, but this is in line with Anishinaabe principles of knowledge creation. Furthermore, Lee exemplifies an attitude of humility toward knowledge and does claim to have the authority to share this knowledge simply because he is a university professor. Rather, he chooses to remain faithful to the Anishinaabe principles of knowledge creation. In this testimony, we can see the difficult position that Indigenous researchers hold; as academics, they are expected to participate in the knowledge creation economy of research, but as Indigenous peoples, they are also expected to protect and remain true to their teachings.

Strategies to Protect Indigenous Knowledge in Academic contexts

When I brought up this tension in our conversation, Lee presented to me a strategy that allows the researcher to include Indigenous knowledge in their research without giving away its core teaching. Lee explained how Métis artist David Garneau, in his work “Sovereign Display of Territory,” used a creative way of sharing Indigenous knowledge through a replica. The replica signals Indigenous “presence” and creates a space in the public sphere for Indigenous peoples, but the replica does not reveal the sacred knowledge of the original. For Lee, the idea of using a replica instead of the original could also be applied to Indigenous research:

[David Garneau] He’s thinking about colonization and Indigenous sovereignties and Indigenous presence through art. And it’s really similar to what we’re talking about in terms of knowledge, but he’s talking about it in terms of sacred artwork. He says that we have a need to create art that is an object of expression of culture that has all the intricate

meanings, all the teachings embedded in that object that western society calls “art.” But Métis would call it “an expression of sovereignty,” but it gets misinterpreted as art that it is not. So, he says that we need to engage with the broader society, but instead of just turning over that artwork and saying, “Here’s the most valued secret pieces of knowledge of our culture built into this thing that you call art,” and then it’s gone and misinterpreted and cannibalized – instead of doing that, create a “replica” that doesn’t give away the secrets, that looks similar, but it doesn’t have any of the kind of deep knowledge embedded in it; it just looks the same.

This strategy of creating a replica for the purposes of preservation is often used in art. For example, the famous Paleolithic cave paintings of Lascaux (Dordogne, France) were discovered in 1941 and exposed to the public from 1948 to 1963. The exposure of these 20,000-year-old cave paintings to carbon dioxide, heat, and humidity damaged them permanently. The cave was therefore closed to the public permanently in 1963 to prevent further deterioration. In 1983, *Lascaux II* was created as a perfect replica of the main murals in the cave. It was painted by a single artist (Monique Petrayl) over the course of 10 years (1973–1983), using prehistoric techniques to perfectly reproduce some of the original paintings’ scale and composition. If we draw an analogy, Garneau’s replica preserves the original knowledge and prevents damage from overexposure to the elements, while simultaneously allowing a larger public to appreciate it.

Lee clarified the concept of the “replica” using the example of a beaded moccasin. The original is the local hand-made moccasin, and the replica is the moccasin one can acquire at any souvenir shop:

They look similar, but they tell a very different story. The moccasin that you buy at Walmart tells the story of global capitalism. The moccasin that you buy from Grandma tells the story

of having a relationship with her brother, who goes and hunts the moose, and having the relationship with her grandmother who taught her how to bead.

In terms of Indigenous knowledge, one moccasin embodies relationships and how skills get passed down through generations; it embodies: “*the story that gets passed down to kids.*” The other copies the original; it reproduces some of its elements, but as it is devoid of relationality, it is “*for the people outside who should not have access to that knowledge*” (Lee).

The replica is also a conceptual strategy that, as Lee explained, serves to create “*a space between the sacred knowledge and the broader colonial context.*” The result is that it makes Indigenous culture visible within the larger social context, while preserving the intrinsic knowledge of the original. Lee clarified that this replica “*creates a space specifically to share our presence without giving away all the secrets of the knowledge systems.*” In terms of Indigenous research, this means that certain things should not be published or shared outside of their original context, especially without consent and explicit authority to share them. Another way that Indigenous knowledge is made visible in academic and non-academic contexts is through ceremonies. Today, ceremonies are often conducted in non-Indigenous contexts, and the concept of the replica is useful to make sense of these occurrences.

Numerous ceremonies are now conducted on university campuses or at conferences with the intent of making Indigenous culture visible. Sacred fires, Smudging, and Opening Prayers all serve to create, as Lee explained, “*a sense of safety for some Indigenous students.*” These ceremonies, often modified to be conducted in non-Indigenous contexts, can be considered replicas, as they present certain aspects of Indigenous knowledge but not all of them. Lee contrasted these ceremonies with more complex and secret ceremonies, such as the Cree “*shaking*

tent” ceremony, which should not be done on a campus, as that is not the appropriate context, nor would these ceremonies be fully understood and appreciated in such a context.

Wilson Danard, in her role as knowledge holder working in academic institutions, corroborated this claim and retold how she makes sure that some ceremonies are available for Indigenous students on campus, but only as learning tools to support them, not as knowledge giveaways:

So, somebody is developing a Firekeepers’ Program. The Firekeepers will be learning about the fire, sitting with the fire, knowing yourself through the fire. Or it could be the moon, knowing yourself through the moon, understanding yourself through the moon, but are we giving you the teaching? No.

As in her dissertation, Wilson Danard uses in public only ceremonies that consist of published songs. They are effective tools for teaching, but they do not give away the most sacred songs held by communities. But, as she expressed, there is always the dilemma of how much to include and how much to withhold:

Do I not do that ceremony-type teaching approach with the water to not share it so that it doesn’t get appropriated? Or do I share it because it’s so effective? I can’t teach that. That’s the other part. Whatever is happening to you over there when I’m speaking for this water, and you’re holding your own vessel, and you’re thinking or connecting, I can’t teach that ... So, it’s that place of always wondering, should I be doing this? Again, I just go to the internet. So, the only song that I sing is the one that’s online for the water walk. I’m not singing our own ceremonial songs for the water. It’s online. Anybody can learn that online. If I was actually doing a water ceremony in the Lodge, I wouldn’t be singing that one.

In conclusion, the strategy of using a replica to share Indigenous knowledge, whether through art or ceremonies, is effective in academic contexts because it gives form to the more abstract principles of Indigenous epistemologies while preventing knowledge appropriation:

[The replica] it gestures towards the importance of relationality and spirituality in knowing without necessarily giving all the secrets away. I think that's an interesting balance: how do you demonstrate that spirituality, or land-based relationality, are important to knowing something without teaching the random white kid, who is hearing for the first time ever about Indigenous people, the very core secrets of Anishinaabe society? There is, I think, a bit of a dance there. (Lee)

Dancing this dance means that publishing within an Indigenous paradigm must seek first to protect the knowledge and then the people who hold that knowledge. In both cases, it seeks to protect community. This attitude toward publishing is hard to uphold in academic contexts and demands integrity of Indigenous researchers, as it conflicts with the intensive and extractive western research approach still present in many Indigenous contexts.

In conclusion, when considering how, where, or when to share Indigenous knowledge, context is crucial because context is an aspect of knowledge. Land-based knowledge systems are grounded in places and are enacted in certain spaces. Knowledge is thus shared by specific people, at precise occasions, in exact locations, and all these components carry meaning. All the spatiotemporal specificities are part of the body knowledge and set natural boundaries for what can be shared, by whom, and with whom; respecting these limits prevents appropriation. The paradox of Indigenous research therefore lies in its dissemination of Indigenous knowledge through publications, which are devoid of context. In the absence of the community- and land-based context of knowledge, Indigenous researchers must devise strategies to protect the

knowledge included in their research. Indigenous scholars therefore look for ways to protect their sources of knowledge. They might choose to disclose less than what they know, resort to using replicas, or rely only on previously published material. Ultimately, the dilemma of how much knowledge can be disclosed in academic publications comes down to each researcher's connection to Indigenous knowledge. As Wilson underlined, it is the "*personal relationship*" with knowledge, and not the pressure to produce, that must guide each researcher to know, intuitively, what can and what cannot be shared with a larger audience:

You have to be conscious of, "I'm building a relationship with this other person, they tell me something in confidence"; you build that personal relationship, so you get to know that person well enough to know, "Yes, they'd be happy for me to share that." ... But if you're talking with a really close friend, and they share a really personal story, you recognize, "That's a personal story, not to share that with other people." ... I think that if we start to think of knowledge in that way, then it redefines what's going to be private and what's going to be open for sharing.

The Future of Indigenous Research is Bright

The last subtheme of this chapter serves as an opening. Much has been discussed regarding how the academic environment has changed in response to the expansion of Indigenous research: the increased number of allies from varied disciplines and in various positions within the academy, the scrutiny of non-Indigenous "experts," and the strategies used to protect Indigenous knowledge from being "*cannibalized*" (Lee). This opening contains reflections on the future of Indigenous research. Lee saw the future of Indigenous studies and research as moving away from "*pan-Indigenism*" and toward "*Nation-Specific Studies*":

I think about the trajectory of Indigenous Studies as a discipline. We started in 1969. The discipline had to dismantle the anthropology-based approach to Indigenous people, and, at the same time, it had to play nice to get its foot in the door, to become a space inside the Academy. So, it had to do this balancing act ... And then, out of that, comes this transition to a space where what I would call “Indigenist” research emerges, where it’s now on the terms of Indigenous peoples, as opposed to borrowing and “playing nice” and having a compromise with western terms. So, before Linda, T. Smith, I think part of that playing nice had to take somewhat of a pan-Indigenous approach. It was also strategic; it was a way, I think, of finding other allies, other Indigenous allies across universities. Saying, “We are talking about the same thing,” it is strategy, but now, I think it’s antiquated. So, the pan-Indigenous thing was useful at a time. It’s become less useful now because of the limitations. The evolution of the discipline is almost to write itself out of existence. If what Indigenous Studies have been arguing for since Linda T. Smith, is for Nation-Specific Studies, well, is there a need for Indigenous Studies anymore? I think there will be, I think it’s a strong enough umbrella. But I won’t be surprised if more and more “Cree Studies Programs” and “Métis Studies programs” become a university’s flagship for “Indigenous Studies program.”

Lee painted an interesting picture, seeing the entrance of more and more Indigenous scholars into the academy as a way to support Nation-specific programs that will be rooted in those scholars’ own knowledge systems. Therefore, as pan-Indigenous approaches retreat, we see the affirmation of context-specific epistemologies and methodologies. Wilson agreed with this vision of contextualized and Nation-specific Indigenous research. He explained how he has seen Indigenous

research moving in this direction in his role as mentor to the next generation of Indigenous scholars:

I think that it is an area that's going to keep growing, and it's going to become more and more contextualized to specific locations, which is fantastic, but then, it also builds up the broader knowledge base because yes, this is how this works. ... So I've got a student right now that is writing a "Beach Methodology" because they are people who live on the beach. So how this works on the beach, and this is how this works in different countries – Indigenous forms of country, not geopolitical country – and land territories. They are going to have their own methodologies that make sense for them. And it's based on their own land-based teachings and land-based knowledge that I think that's really really fantastic. And it's really good. I'm really excited about the future of what we can do.

The future of Indigenous research seems bright as an increasing number of young Indigenous scholars anchor their research in who they are and where they come from. This will support the creation of "Nation-specific programs that will, in turn, benefit all students as it will develop a relationship with local Indigenous communities. However, to counterbalance this very optimistic vision, it should be said that this is possible only as long as all Indigenous researchers and their allies remain congruent and align their positionalities with their epistemologies and their methodologies. In Absolon's experience, this is easier said than done.

Absolon recognized that a pathway has been created and that more people are doing Indigenous research, but in her experience, there is a huge difference between what people *say* they want to do and what they actually *can* do, and this is because of "*internalized colonialism*":

And a couple of things that I've seen over the years, and this has been largely informed by my experience of teaching Indigenous research methodologies in the last 15 years and

working with all kinds of grad students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and helping them to make that discernment in their articulation and in their positionality and location of where they're really searching from. That's why it's the centre. That's why location to me is the doorway to understanding how you're going to enact a methodology that you think you're going to enact. So, there's a difference between what people "think" they're going to do, and then what they're actually "able" to do. Most people have come into this through what I call "colonial research trauma," meaning they have been socialized and they've taught about research through colonial theories and methodologies that have erased Indigenous knowledge. So Indigenous searchers ideally want to do land-based, but there's internalized colonialism that's getting in the way. So, they need to unpack that; it's the same with non-Indigenous researchers. Everybody has "internalized colonialism," so there's a difference between people's ideals, like wanting to do things and adopt or learn how to research holistically, then actually being able to do that. Because if they still have internalized notions of what they think is real, quote unquote, "research" and they're still not able to resist the push of the academy, and of their supervisors, and of their own colonial systems that are pushing them to do things in a certain way, then the limitations are obvious on their ability.

The future of Indigenous research is bright, as long as researchers, both Indigenous and Settler allies, keep in check their "internalized colonialism," ground their research in their own positionalities, and refrain from using deceitful tactics to anchor their authority in the field. Another challenge to be foreseen is that as Indigenous research expands and more people use this approach, it becomes harder to see who is doing what.

The transition of Indigenous research into a quasi-mainstream research approach evokes the image of a grand river getting larger and larger, gaining momentum and strength. The initial tributary rivers that fed this stream were the first generations of Indigenous researchers and their allies; they were the first to struggle to have this research approach accepted and recognized. These are people like Kovack. Currently, many people have joined this *Indigenist* movement due more to the political climate of reconciliation than because of any personal connection to Indigenous peoples. In this situation, we can say that something else has come up, a hidden undercurrent. As Indigeneity and Indigenous studies have become popular, many people have tried to somehow take advantage of this situation. This undercurrent of what could be identified as opportunism and duplicity in relation to positionality lies beneath the larger river of Indigenous research, and it “pollutes” its principles. Lavallee urged me to bring some of these issues to the forefront in my research:

I would like to see what comes out of your work, something very firm in making this statement. So, it is not a matter of being Indigenous, because you can be Indigenous, and you can still be race-shifting, or appropriating other nations’ knowledges. So, that is something that you can dive really deep into and have a really lengthy conversation. So, for me, the people that do that, who may have Indigenous ancestry but really don’t have that cultural or that traditional knowledge, and then they are in the academy, and they’re talking about an “Indigenous framework” or a “pan-approach,” they’re the ones who end up, if they’re critiqued, they dig their heels in and say, “You can’t talk to me like that! I’m Indigenous!” And then that does a disservice to all of us coming up. I think that’s something that has to be talked about more; I see it all the time.

Considering all that has been said in this chapter, it is crucial to have a strategy in place to discern what constitutes good and valuable Indigenous research and to identify research that is just “clothed” in the dress of Indigeneity.

Chapter 6: Finding Strategies to Assure the Integrity of Indigenous Research

Introduction

From the beginning, this study on Indigenous epistemologies, Indigenous methodologies, and researcher positionality aimed to identify clear criteria and develop an assessment tool to help Indigenous partners examine research projects. This was identified as a concrete way for this study to practice reciprocity with Indigenous peoples. In the consultation phase of this research, I presented this goal to Indigenous researchers and explained how my objective was to find an assessment tool that would allow communities to assess the integrity and the quality of any proposed Indigenous research.

Presented with this idea, Wilson agreed that this could be helpful because, *“Like in any research, there is going to be “good” research and “bad” Indigenous research. And just because it is “Indigenous research” doesn’t mean it’s necessarily going to be good.”* However, Wilson cautioned me that finding such a tool would be difficult: *“I think a couple of people have tried to write criteria to judge Indigenous research by, but it’s always a little bit problematic because it’s going to be different in different contexts.”*

In this chapter, I present the concept of congruency that is the basis for the assessment tool I developed that I think could work regardless of the context in which the Indigenous research is conducted. For the findings of an Indigenous research project to be valuable and reliable, there must be congruency, inner coherence, at every level of the research, between the researcher’s positionality, the underlying epistemology guiding the research, the theoretical framework used, the proposed methodology and methods, and the Indigenous context in which the research took place. This may seem obvious, but this principle of congruency was not always followed in the research I reviewed. Indeed, I had to discard many studies during the scoping process because they

lacked inner coherence. At the stage of the scoping process, I discussed this finding (see the scoping review conclusion) but could not research it more deeply. It would be only during the conversational phase that this insight could be really unravelled and explored.

The following chapter details first how, when presented with this idea, Indigenous scholars supported it and, second, how Indigenous scholars' comments on this strategy pushed the boundaries of the concept of congruency and revealed the many levels at which it *must* operate in order to have rigorous and reliable Indigenous research.

Congruency and “(E)-pistemological Awareness”

Congruency is defined as the quality or state of “agreement”, it is also associated with “consistency”, “accordance” (Barber, 2004, Congruency definition). The definition of consistency is “the state of being consistent; the state or quality of holding or sticking together and retaining shape” (Barber, 2004, Consistency definition).

In research, this notion is especially relevant because it can be used to assess whether its various components, operating at different stages and levels of the research process, are in alignment, are “holding” or “sticking” together. This accordance is one of the things that assures validity. When congruency is missing, research is insubstantial and unreliable because there is a mismatch between the research questions and objectives and between the theoretical framework and the methodology used. Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009) point out that “good” qualitative research must be like “an interconnected unit of research questions, knowledges, methods and methodologies that contribute to assure the study’s aim” (p. 696). Internal cohesion must be deliberate and articulated to avoid a “characterization of the study as random, unintentionally intuitive, or non-systematic” (p. 696). This is achieved through what Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009) call “(e)-pistemological awareness.” In this context, “(e)pistemology” refers to a “non-

transcendental knowing situated in the context of our everyday lives” (p. 687), to which the word “awareness” is added to mean “the informed positionings in regard to knowledge, truth(s), epistemic conditions, and justifications within a particular research project” (p. 687). For Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009), it is precisely through the “process of self-reflection” or “(e)pistemological awareness” that research gains validity and credibility:

The argument for (e)pistemological awareness, instantiation of methods, and methodological transparency becomes especially important in the current political and academic climate, in which many question the design choices, purposes, and trustworthiness of qualitative studies and other alternative research approaches. (p. 687)

(E)pistemological awareness therefore generates transparency as researchers purposefully align their research design with their theoretical perspectives and with the application of their field methods (p. 688). Furthermore, Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009) point out that this internal cohesion is as important for readers as it is for researchers, as readers play an active role in validating research:

If the onus of responsibility for determining the trustworthiness of a qualitative research piece is shared with the reader, then these details are important for the reader’s understandings of research texts and proposed knowledge claims. (p. 690)

In sum, (e)pistemological awareness leads to alignment between the chosen ways of knowing, research questions, and methodology, thus leading to conclusions that are consistent by virtue of their congruency. Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009) illustrate this principle using the example of feminist research:

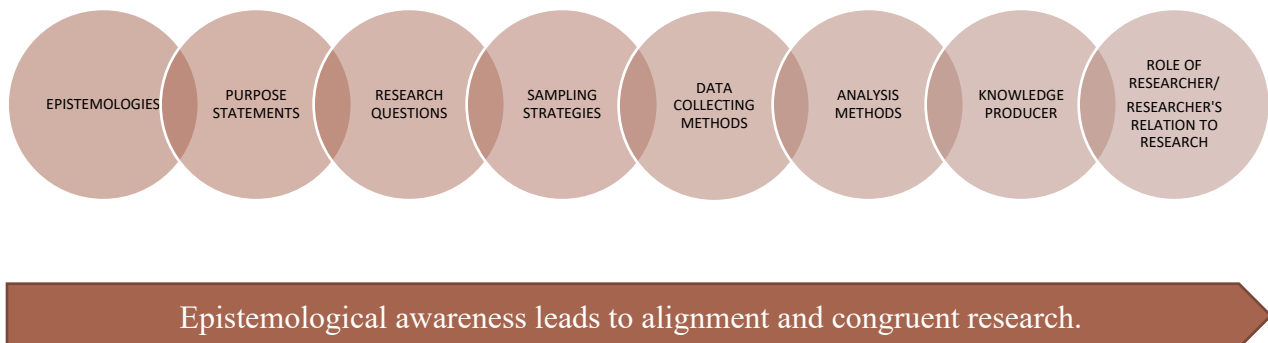
This (e)pistemological awareness connected to or supported by the instantiation of methods can assist researchers in conducting and designing studies that are driven by meaningful

research questions supported by their selected ways of knowing. For example, some feminist researchers assume an inquiry stance and ask feminist research questions that are framed in feminist terminology and discourse. (p. 689–690)

Figure 11 (below) illustrates how all the research components identified by Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009) should be aligned through “(e)pistemological awareness” (p. 689–690). Notably, this figure shows how everything flows from an underlying, overarching epistemology, which is “the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective” and therefore precedes all the other components of research (p. 687).

Figure 11

Components of Research in Alignment



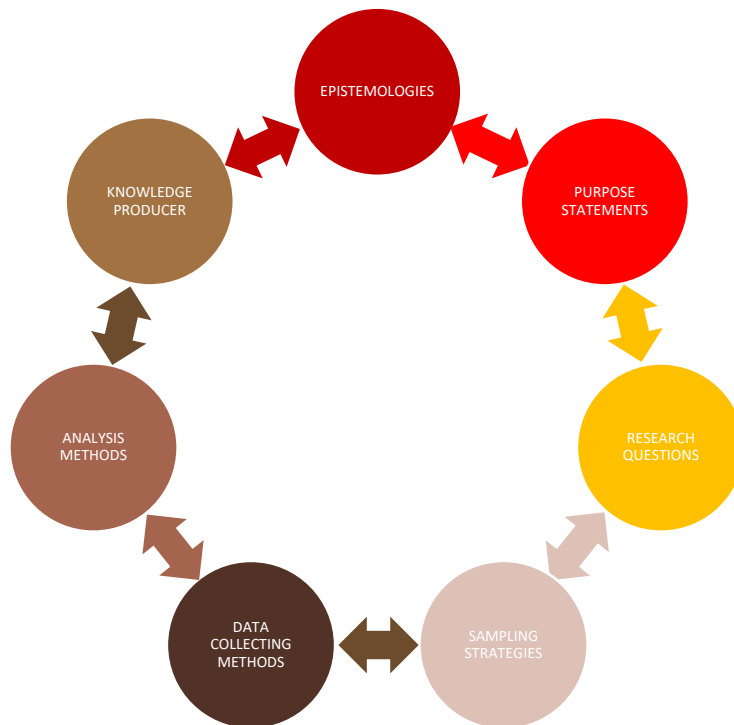
In contrast, incoherent or poor research is characterized by a “lack of clarity from the internalist perspective” which manifests as “(e)pistemological and methodological sloppiness” (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009, p. 984). This is problematic because internal cohesion is what buttresses the conclusions and claims of the researcher. Moreover, Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009) recommend that “more qualitative researchers ask such questions as ‘*Who* is/are the main knowledge producer(s) in this research?’” (p. 694). The goal of this awareness is to ensure that the (e)pistemological and theoretical stance of the researcher is aligned with that of the research:

These questions and reflections are ultimately (e)pistemological questions that could assist a researcher in designing a study that reflects and supports the researcher's (e)pistemological stance. (p. 694)

Koro-Ljungberg et al.'s (2009) claims concur with previous work by Indigenous researchers concerning positional reflexivity and critical awareness. The diagram below (Figure 12) illustrates that congruent research is not linear process, nor is (e)pistemological awareness something that one establishes once and for all. On the contrary, it is a continuous, iterative reflexive process that demands constant readjustment. The questioning and reassessing lead to alignment, and this maintains the internal cohesion and guarantees the reliability of the research.

Figure 12

(E)pistemological Awareness as a Circular Process



Indigenous Research, (E)pistemological Awareness, and Congruency

Indigenous research is principle based and is rooted in Indigenous relational epistemologies. These manifest in multiple contexts and ecologies as diverse Indigenous place-based knowledge systems. In this context, it is important to specify that it is more accurate to speak of “epistemological awareness” rather than of “(e)pistemological awareness” because Indigenous epistemologies do encompass the transcendental, even as they include “non-transcendental knowing situated in the context of our everyday lives” (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009, p. 687). Therefore, within Indigenous research, epistemological awareness guaranties congruency between a specific vision of knowledge and the other components of the research. For this congruency to be achieved, attention and awareness must be given to researchers’ underlying epistemologies to determine whether they are aligned with a relational way of conceptualizing knowledge. In Indigenous research, this critical alignment cannot just be considered a bonus; rather, it is a necessary condition, as Wilson confirmed:

It goes back to the epistemology and ontology; again, if knowledge is relational, and all our reality is relational, when you are writing about a relationship, you can’t just write about one side of the relationship: “This is the knowledge I learned.” Well, who the hell was learning it? You have to write about your side of the relationship, too.

Consequently, if the personal relationship with Indigenous knowledge is not stated explicitly, if the epistemic stance of the researcher is not identified clearly from the beginning, then the research cannot meet the criteria of congruency because a vital element is missing.

From the scoping review, I observed many instances in which this lack of clear positionality was the weak link in a research project. Some researchers were good at justifying their research design and their methods, but they assumed that they *had* to use an Indigenous

worldview or an Indigenous paradigm because they were doing research in an Indigenous context. However, it was evident that they left themselves out of the project and seemed to have little connection to an Indigenous conception of world and of knowledge production. This was obvious in cases where positionality was not stated and where pan-Indigenous frameworks were used. Pan-Indigenous frameworks, in particular, were not only vague and disconnected from the researchers but also, they were disconnected from the specific Indigenous context where the research was taking place.

Robust Indigenous research, on the other hand, demonstrated how the position of the researcher was congruent with the proposed epistemology and methodology and with the local context. Consequently, in Indigenous relational research, the relationship with Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous peoples must come first and must be named. If there is *no* relationship, then it is *not* Indigenous research. When relationality and accountability are missing, it is simply more of the same old research *on* Indigenous peoples.

“Congruence” for Indigenous Researchers

In her book, Absolon (2011) uses the word “congruence and explains that the “search for congruence” is the defining characteristic of Indigenous research, which must have “theories and methodologies that are *congruent* with Indigenous worldviews and philosophies” (p. 81). That is why in her Petal Flower framework, Absolon (2011) puts the Indigenous researcher at the centre of research. Congruency is therefore about “making the relationship between the roots, self and methods apparent” (p. 81). Moreover, Absolon (2011) argues that Indigenous researchers must constantly work to maintain this “methodological harmony” or a congruence between “who” they are and “how” they are conducting their research (p. 82). Again, although Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009) state, in no uncertain terms, that good qualitative research should have a high level of

internal consistency, congruency is not a requirement within western research. Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009) make a strong argument for (e)pistemological awareness because in most cases, as Wilson explained, “*Researchers can ‘talk the talk,’ but they’re not necessarily living that in their everyday lives, which is all you need in western research. You don’t have to ‘live’ according to western ideals in doing western research.*”

Nonetheless, it is possible to nuance this statement by thinking of western feminist researchers or western anti-colonial or anti-racist thinkers who probably *do* live out their lives according to these ideals. Once again, this is tied to their positionality, as women and as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and to their lived experience of sexism, colonialism, and racism.

In addition, Absolon (2011) points out in her book that western researchers are doing research within a western context, so they do not have a sense of their own acculturation when conducting research. This is not to say that there are not multiple points of view and competing theoretical positionings within western thought, but there are also some basic shared assumptions about the nature of reality, about how knowledge is produced, and about what sources of knowledge are valid. In contrast with this, Absolon explained that many Indigenous researchers see themselves as being in discordance with western theories and western research methods, and when they try to work with this worldview and conception of research, it only leads them further down the path of cognitive assimilation:

But then what do we do? We give control of how we come to know over to the euro- western bodies that control knowledge production. And I wrote about this in Kaandossiwin when I said, how one of my big “aha moments” was, “Oh, that’s how they keep us illiterate and ignorant!” by removing us from our power of how we come to know and in decentring us

from the centre of our research. And if we are decentred from our research, of course, you're going to feel fearful, you're going to feel anxious, you're going to be terrified.

It therefore becomes essential, for Absolon, (2011), to create ways of doing research that are decolonized, that are congruent with Indigeneity, and that are not based on western knowledge:

All re-searchers identified that their search for methods congruent with their Indigeneity was instrumental. *Indigenous congruence*, I believe is essential, to the research principles, methodology, and ultimately the outcome ... A determination to stay congruent with culture, traditions, historicity, worldview, family, and community creates methodologies that reflect an expression of the self in research. The beauty and distinction of our work then is a result of all that each of us carries within. (p. 84)

Furthermore, for Absolon (2011), the meaningfulness and validity of Indigenous research lies in its capacity to mirror the deepest epistemological stance of the Indigenous researcher. This having been said, considering the context of Indigenous research in 2021, the concept of “congruency” that I proposed to Indigenous researchers must necessarily encompass the positionality and epistemic stance of non-Indigenous researchers. Thus, it goes beyond the concept Absolon introduces in her book (2011) but is nonetheless informed by it.

Discussing Congruency

When I presented the idea of “congruency” to Indigenous scholars, I argued that maintaining congruency between positionality, epistemology, methodology, and context cannot be required of Indigenous researchers only; allies doing this type of work must also adhere to congruency. Non-Indigenous researchers cannot neglect this requirement and pretend that this does not concern them because they are western researchers. Congruency is a principle that must

be carried out at all levels of the research process and is a quality that must be found in *all* Indigenous research.

Additionally, as Indigenous research is currently a growing trend across disciplines, examining congruency within any given study could be a conceptual tool for sifting through the innumerable projects that are currently using the label of Indigenous research to get funding.

In our conversations, Lee confirmed that congruency could be a valuable concept on various levels:

The word you used earlier is really the most important word, in my opinion, in this context; it's that word "congruency." Because, when you start getting into "authenticity," it is slippery, and who has enough blood quantum to "think" Indigenous? I think that Indigenous studies, at least in North America, are a multi-ethnic space, and I think, in principle, it is a space where many people can do Indigenous research. And what makes it Indigenous? Is it decolonizing? Does it centre the needs of communities? Does it decentre heteropatriarchy including multiple voices? Is it congruent with a specific nation, at least in axiology, in terms of what it values, in terms of knowledge, if not the epistemology itself? I think non-Indigenous folks can do that work. But that's going to be heavily dependent on having good and genuine relationships. Otherwise, how are you going to know if it's congruent? And so, congruency to me is the key.

In this statement, Lee underlined how "*congruency*" is "*key*" within the context of the evolution of Indigenous research. Fifteen years ago, only Indigenous researchers were doing this, and non-Indigenous researchers were doing mostly western research *on* Indigenous peoples, so there was a real dichotomy between the two approaches. As the field has expanded, these boundaries have blurred, and within a "*multi-ethnic space*," it makes no sense to say, "You can do Indigenous

research only if you are Indigenous.” Including these different actors within the field of Indigenous research in a way that holds them accountable can be done through congruency. Lee also commented that the most important place for congruency is between positionality and epistemology:

I think “congruency” is honestly one of the most important concepts in Indigenous Studies.

It’s something that’s not talked about enough. I don’t think the full boundaries and the kind of opportunities of what congruency means are fully explored yet in Indigenous Studies.

It’s been talked about in terms of its value in the sense of ensuring that axiology and epistemology make it onto the radar when you’re constructing research projects. What avenues haven’t been explored yet, when it comes to congruency, are what you are talking about, congruency with epistemology and positionality.

Therefore, congruency could be used as a compass, pointing in the direction of valid and credible Indigenous research. Using this concept as a guiding principle could be valuable for Indigenous communities but also for all academics who are considering doing Indigenous research.

Examining the congruency of positionality and epistemology in a research project also ensures that embodied Indigenous knowledge systems are not misused and simply treated as the latest “trend” in theoretical approaches. There is obviously still a romanticized notion of Indigeneity that attracts many researchers to do Indigenous research, even if they have few or no relationship to Indigenous peoples. In the relationship theme, it is this discrepancy between who researchers are and the research they are doing that is most problematic for Wilson:

I think that there’s a couple of problems. One problem is there’s a lot of researchers that actually don’t know what they’re doing. So, they just say they’re doing Indigenous research because they happen to be working in Indigenous contexts. So yeah, they can speak, they

can talk the talk, but they're not necessarily living that in their everyday lives. ... So yeah, if you can say the right words, you can sort of pretend you're doing Indigenous research.

One of the reasons this conversation around positionality and epistemology has not yet been fully explored is that identity, both Indigenous and Settler, is a contentious topic and a political minefield in Canada. However, considering that Indigenous research is currently moving into a mainstream position and is becoming a decreasingly alternative and marginal approach, it seems necessary to have this conversation. Every research approach or theory that has gained momentum has had to do this. For instance, when feminist studies gained popularity and became a multi-gender space, a conversation occurred at some point around gender positionality and whether men can or cannot be feminists. Therefore, Indigenous research also requires clear guidelines and criteria so that not every research piece *on* Indigenous people or that uses an “Indigenous worldview” as its theoretical framework is automatically assumed to be Indigenous research.

For Rowe, the growing popularity of Indigenous research makes a sifting strategy necessary. According to her, looking at congruency could push researchers and granting agencies to rethink the kind of research that they want to do and fund, as well as push them to uphold relational accountability:

So maybe that's a community-based project, but is it Indigenous research just because you're talking to Indigenous people about Indigenous issues? No, it's not. Then all the decades of health research that have been done in our communities would be Indigenous research and that is fundamentally the opposite of Indigenous research.

I think there's just a lot of the excitement around the popularization of the term and to be able to grab on to funding. Funding agencies also have a responsibility and a piece of this as well because that is what's being funded as Indigenous research. What are the funding

bodies responsibilities' in ensuring accountability alignment and that the appropriation isn't happening?

Lee and Rowe also agreed that this conceptual tool, translated as a concrete assessment tool, could help Indigenous communities navigate research proposals:

I think it is really useful because communities, especially if a research proposal goes to chief and council, most of the time, they don't have the training to really critique a research proposal. But more importantly, I would say, most of the time, they're just clobbered with a million different other things that are much more immediate, road building and economic development. So, I can see definitely a capacity issue there, and a way to build that kind of capacity. (Lee)

And then how can research capacity be built in communities so that they can actually have the time and the funds and the experts to be able to sift through all of these requests that are coming their way? And so, to have that capacity as well. So, there's lots of different pieces coming together. Because I think it's really an important area, when I was reading your scoping review, I really felt like this is a missing piece that could really contribute to building that capacity and to making explicit: "Researchers, you answer these questions for us, you tell us this, and then we can have a conversation." (Rowe)

Additionally, Rowe commented that applying the principle of congruency could ensure that research labelled as Indigenous is modelling the core principles of relationality for future generations of researchers. She expressed concern that Indigenous research could become diluted due to its growing popularity:

Because then that's held up as the example on which everything else then is built on. And I talked about the foundation of the work of Drs. Wilson and Hart, and Kovach and so

many others, and that truly is research grounded in Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and methodologies. That then gets pushed and pushed and pushed and pushed and this other concept of what Indigenous research is then gets held up as an example for graduate students who are learning about Indigenous research methodologies. And it's a dangerous spiral, I think.

Lavallee, who expressed that her “pet peeve” is when she encounters ill-defined Indigenous research, also had this to say about congruency:

I think that if the research that you're doing comes up with strategies for people to review things, to really wade through the western language that is really selling for people who are applying for grants ... Because that's what I do when I read something, and it's not that if someone's not Indigenous they can't do good work, but it's more like if you're saying you are using an Indigenous framework, you need to define it better, so strategies like that.

In sum, Indigenous researchers recognized the notion of “congruency” and saw that it could be developed into a valuable assessment tool. They also made it clear that Indigenous research is not essentialist; it does not demand a certificate of Indigeneity, but it does demand integrity, transparency, and accountability to Indigenous peoples.

Congruency or inner coherence, as emphasized by Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009), must therefore be consistent throughout the research. The Venn diagram (Figure 13) below illustrates the four components of Indigenous research – epistemology, methodology, positionality, and context – in alignment and, at the centre, congruency.

Figure 13

Congruent Indigenous Research

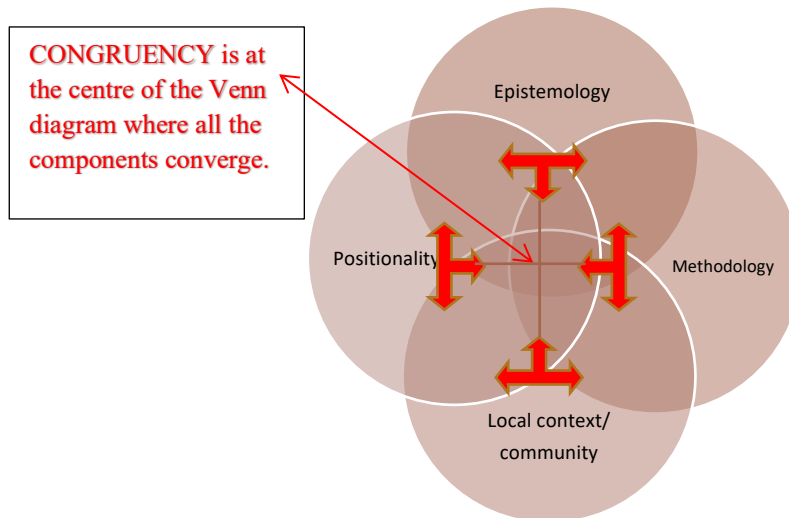


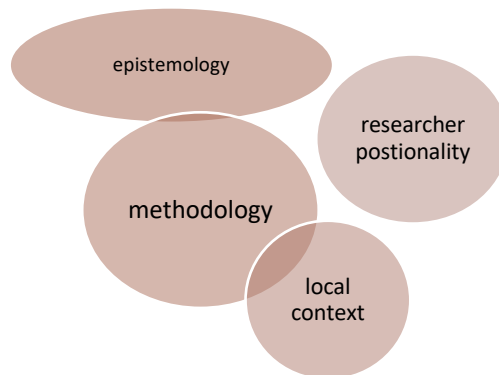
Figure 13 also shows the different levels at which congruency must be present for the research to display the overall quality of congruency (red arrows). These are between 1) the epistemology and the methodology, the local context, and the researcher's positionality; 2) the epistemology and the methodology, the local context, and the researcher's positionality; 3) the methodology and the epistemology, the local context, and the researcher's positionality; 4) the local context and the methodology, the epistemology, and the researcher's positionality; and 4): the researcher's positionality and the local context, methodology, and epistemology. Considering that there are overlaps between these four levels of congruency, I separate them into three themes and discuss them separately, although they are interrelated.

In contrast to Figure 13, Figure 14 illustrates non-congruent Indigenous research: there is little alignment between the components of research. While all the components are there, they lack the connecting thread of epistemological awareness. Moreover, the researcher is not clearly related to the research in any meaningful way. Their connection is conceptual and intellectual, but in regard to their own epistemological stance, they remain an outsider to Indigenous research. The epistemology, therefore, is disembodied and does not connect either with the researcher or with

the people it is supposed to mirror. The methodology is what is usually most connected to the local environment, but sometimes this, too, can be disconnected (e.g., offering tobacco as a gift in Catholic communities).

Figure 14

Disconnected Incongruent Research



Epistemology, Methodology and Local Contexts

The first level of congruency in good qualitative research, as discussed by Koro-Ljungberg et al. (2009), must be between the epistemology and methodology. Wilson explained that this is crucial in Indigenous research because the way that abstract principles, such as respect, are enacted is in how they are applied locally:

So, you have a principle of relationality, or you have a principle of respect, but you have to apply that in different cultural contexts in different ways. So how you demonstrate respect in Cree culture is going to be different than how you demonstrate respect in Bunjalung culture. So, you have to contextualize it to the local country that you're working on. So, that should be in there. But that's again the problem with pan-Indigenism, pan-

Indigeneity, that it has a tendency also to become a little bit dogmatic, and it doesn't have the local context that it needs.

The dogmatism that Wilson referred to was previously addressed in the subtheme on methodologies and knowledge during the discussion of tobacco's use as a pan-Indigenous method for consent regardless of whether it was appropriate to the context where the research was taking place. Wilson further explained the need for congruency between the research framework and the local context by comparing epistemology and methodology to “policy” and “procedure”:

I think all Indigenous research should be principle based, so like based on principles of relational accountability, based on respect and reciprocity. So those principles are everywhere, but it's the local land-based context that says how you apply those principles. So, it's like the difference between “policy” and “procedure”: the policy is this, but the actual procedure on the ground is this. That's how you enact a policy in this location. And it's going to be different in every land and in every country.

Lavallee also offered a warning, explaining that the temptation of pan-Indigenism is never far. According to her, there is a tendency in researchers to want to find grand universal laws and ways of doing things, when Indigenous research is actually local and land-based:

Our theories are very based on the land, and that's why we can't define it in a prime way. We can say what we did, but you know, the caution to that is, I remember someone said to me, “Oh, look at this article, there's a very specific way about doing this.” And then when I read it, I said, “That's a Haudenosaunee way.” So, in that person's mind, they thought, “Now we can do this for all Indigenous people.” So that's the risk, and even though the article was very specific, that's how that person read it.

Congruency between the Researcher's Positionality, Epistemology, Methodology, and Local Contexts

This is the type of “congruence” that Absolon (2011) discusses most in her book. This is the most important form of congruency because the way that Indigenous researchers do research *must* be congruent with their worldviews, their ways of knowing, and their place-based cultures. All these components create specific research designs (methodologies) that are “grounded” in the self: “We need to ground our research frameworks and methods in Indigenous ways of knowing” (p. 55). In our conversation, she explained that she still sees congruency as central because Indigenous research is about “*restoring, reclaiming how we come to know in a way that is meaningful to our knowledge systems, to our nations, to our communities, and to our family.*”

In the case of non-Indigenous researchers, congruency means that they do not claim Indigenous knowledge as theirs; that would be incongruent with their position as Settlers or as allies (however they define it). However, non-Indigenous researchers can acknowledge their affinity to this way of conceptualizing research, and through their relationships with Indigenous peoples, they can explicitly state that their frameworks are “*informed by Indigenous knowledge*” (Absolon). In this way, their positionality makes them accountable, prevents appropriation, and gives credit where credit is due. For Absolon, this is not “*complicated*”; we make it complicated, but with honesty and transparency, it becomes simple:

I think that we have to be okay with saying who we are and who we are not.

I think that's a part of the tricky wishy-washy thing, but it's not complicated.

If you're Indigenous, your location is going to inform your methodology.

I won't change that.

If you're not Indigenous, you can do a holistic methodology that's informed by Indigenous knowledge. It's not complicated.

For Absolon, maintaining congruency consistently throughout the research process is what sets Indigenous research apart from other approaches. Furthermore, congruency between positionality, epistemology, and methodology leads to considering how local contexts inform methodology. Once the researcher is clear about their own epistemological location and how it informs their methodology, then they can make sure that this location is also synchronized with the specific context. Therefore, it can be stated that positional awareness is needed in and of itself, not just as an aspect of epistemological awareness.

How does one create congruency when one is designing a research project? Absolon guides her students through several steps. First, they must become aware of “who” they are and of “what” informs their worldview and epistemology (culture and locality). Then, from that point, they can move onto methodology and local context, linking them all coherently:

So, if you were in my class, I would be like, “Who are you?”

“Where do you come from?” Let's talk about your people. Let's talk about the land that raised you up. Let's talk about the earth that your being has been crafted from.

“What does that mean to you?”

“Who are your ancestors?”

And let's move from that into how you come to know: “What makes sense for you?”

I offer tobacco; it doesn't mean you're going to offer tobacco. That's my culture.

I'm not saying everybody needs to do that; I'm saying get in touch with your location.

I spent a huge amount of time in my class talking about location.

I'm helping you to get re-anchored and reconnected to who you are, where you come from, and what that means in how you want to enact your methodology.

So, if you come from a sweater weaving culture, if you come from a place that carves canoes, or you come from a place that makes birch bark baskets, or you go out onto the ocean, and you come from a whaling culture, all of that matters; or if you come from a place, you only know the city, and you were raised in an urban environment, then that matters.

Absolon helps her students connect who they are to how they will do research. This might seem evident, but there is no predetermined solution for consistently maintaining this congruency throughout the research. Each researcher must find their own way. That is why self-reflection is so pivotal to finding an organic methodology, not an arbitrary one. Wilson shared how as a Cree researcher, he developed his own Opaskwayak Cree methodology, and as a mentor graduate to students, he encourages them to find their *own* research methodologies that are congruent with their positionalities, epistemologies, and localities:

Most of the work I do these days is with doctoral students. A lot of people now are developing their own specific methodologies, which I think is fantastic. So, it's like looking at these general principles, but then how it's applied in different contexts. So, I developed an "Opaskwayak Cree methodology" in my work, but I've got a student working in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh developing "Marma methodology," and another student, from Papua New Guinea, is developing an Indigenous methodology for Papua New Guinea and just different students like this, just developing their own methodologies that are based on their own land, their own country. And the metaphors and the knowledge that is developing out of those, I think, is really fantastic.

Indigenous researchers emphasized that doing research from an Indigenous perspective means putting aside universal laws and becoming completely steeped in a locality, its people, people, and its ecology. For Wilson, this is how “Indigenous science” will develop and how Indigenous knowledge will keep expanding:

I think that it is an area that's going to keep growing. In a sense, it (research) becomes contextualized to specific locations, which is fantastic, but then, it also builds up the broader knowledge base. So, I've got a student right now that is writing a “Beach methodology” because they are people who live on the beach. So how this works on the beach, and this is how this works in different countries – like Indigenous forms of country, not geopolitical country – and land and territories are going to have their own methodologies that make sense for them. And it's based on their own land-based teachings and land-based knowledge.

When one reads about these various “local” methodologies, one wonders if there is room for non-Indigenous researchers to do Indigenous research. Yes, there is. This work will also be based on their positionality as allies and, therefore, on the strength of the relationships they have developed with Indigenous peoples and knowledge systems rather than on being Indigenous. Indigenous research is not an essentialist paradigm, but allies must unpack their own colonial baggage if they wish to participate, as Wilson explained:

If more white people were doing Indigenous research, it would be reconciliatory. But they have to do it properly. Otherwise, they're just treating Indigenous peoples as another resource that they're going to exploit.

As Wilson and Absolon emphasized, methodologies based on location are highly relevant and meaningful to local contexts. An analogy to this is that the use of local medicinal plants is more

beneficial to a community than the importation of foreign medicine; the knowledge of how to use such plants has been tested over time, and the plants are always available as they are part of the ecology. In contrast, importing medicines might be successful in the short term, but their cost and their scarcity will render them ineffective in other ways. The opposite of using land-based ways of knowing to formulate a methodology is using pan-Indigenism to buttress a methodology, which does not work.

Most of the studies that I read that used this pan-Indigenist approach were incongruent because the researcher's position did not come into the picture, nor did the local Indigenous culture, so the connection between positionality, methodology, and local context was non-existent. Pan-Indigenism blurs the specificities of Indigenous knowledge systems and creates a composite homogenized conception of Indigeneity that is said to correspond to *all* Indigenous peoples but actually fits *none* of them. To illustrate this idea during my conversation with Wilson, I used the analogy that incongruent pan-Indigenous research “presents” as Indigenous, like a person wearing an Indigenous “outfit,” perhaps a “headdress,” but under that presentation, the knowledge used fails to connect all the levels of the research. To this analogy, Wilson responded:

*Actually, that's a really good analogy too, because that's how a lot of cultural awareness sort of training stuff is. You put on, you pretend it is Indigenous by putting a feather on, and you put a Medicine Wheel in your results, so you arrange your results in a little medicine wheel. But you've done everything else the same f*** way, you just put on these clothes of Indigenous research without actually changing anything in the heart of it. And it's problematic.*

Regarding congruency, Absolon stated that maintaining it throughout the research is not easy. It demands more in terms of introspection and critical self-assessment, but it is certainly more

rewarding, too. For Absolon, congruent research corresponds to an existential need to make Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies visible. It is a fight against colonial erasure and epistemic violence. Indigenous research therefore puts the Indigenous researcher at the centre because it is a healing process that will make the person “*whole again*”:

Congruency, even in hostile environments, is really important. Because if I left things out, in terms of my process, or what I’m promoting, or what I’m affirming and asserting, then I’m not helping the ones coming behind me to have the artillery, so to speak, or the evidence that they need to be strong, to be congruent, to be whole again, to know that they can do a methodology, they can do a search in a way that they can stand up for, and know that they’ve grown through that. Through congruency, you grow, and you heal, and you realize that not checking yourself, parts of yourself at the door, it’s not good for us, it continues on with the inner divide, the inner fragmenting, that existential anguish that Leroy Little Bear so beautifully articulates ... Why would I spend all my time and all my resources and years of doing this if I have to part ways with myself? When I start presenting my pie, why would I leave slices of that out?

This statement strongly echoes Kovach’s (2017) own journey into Indigenous research:

Because of my life path, and being adopted out, I did not receive a Cree name as an infant, nor did I know whether this would be part of my identity. From today on, I am *Sakawew pisim iskew*. To me, this naming is a metaphysical nod and I give thanks to Spirit. On an intuitive level, I know that Indigenous methodologies is part of this somehow. (p. 231)

Congruency with the Presentation of Knowledge

The last level of congruency that came out of these discussions is with Indigenous knowledge *itself*. This is a level I had not predicted because it is a deeper, less evident layer of

congruency. When I presented to Wilson the idea that congruency between positionality and epistemology could be used to assess the validity of Indigenous research, he acknowledged that it was a good start. He added that it was not enough and that there should also be congruency between how Indigenous knowledge is presented within the research and the nature of Indigenous knowledge itself:

[Congruency] sounds really good. And I would sort of extend that into how they go about sharing knowledge. As you were saying, some people when they write stuff up, it becomes somehow disembodied. So, there is a real skill, and something that you really have to practice hard in being able to transmit this knowledge in a way that's going to be congruent with the knowledge itself.

To conceptualize this level of congruency, we must refer back to the idea, also presented by Wilson, that Indigenous knowledge has agency, that it is embodied and alive. Therefore, the way knowledge is presented in research must reflect the intrinsic characteristics of Indigenous knowledge. He continued to explain this subtle point in the following way:

So, some things, just through reading them, you feel the embodiment of the knowledge. So, I would say that that has "congruence" between the knowledge and the way the knowledge is transmitted. And other ones, they may have learned this stuff, but they're not, the way that they've written it up, is not congruent with the knowledge.

There must therefore be congruency between the written form and the embodied oral or intuitive form of Indigenous knowledge, and this is difficult to do because it requires a more than superficial understanding of Indigenous knowledge. This additional inner layer of congruency also acknowledges that Indigenous knowledge is not usually transmitted in an academic way, out of its

contexts (community, ceremony, and land); therefore, the way in which it is written out must maintain its integrity:

I always have this feedback for papers when people say they're using an Indigenous research paradigm, and then they don't introduce themselves. Well, okay, you're not congruent there to begin with. But also, it's like when they are saying that they are going to use "Yarning" or a specific "conversational" style that they've used in their research methods, in their analysis, well, then, how come you're not using that same conversation style in your present writing?

So, yeah, you have to have that congruence. That's a good word actually, I like that.
(Wilson)

Interestingly, Wilson is talking about a level of congruency that he practiced in his own book. In *Research as Ceremony* (Wilson 2008), he used an Indigenous conversational methodology for his research and then used a conversational style for his book. Other examples of upholding this level of coherence are when researchers use storywork (Archibald, 2008) as a methodology and then present their research using a story. This creates a connection that makes the research intelligible and culturally relevant (Dumbrill & Green, 2008).

This congruency with Indigenous knowledge that Wilson spoke about also corresponds to Kovach's (2017) "Re-storying: Interpretation and Presentation" phase of Indigenous research. Kovach (2017) explains that in the last stage of the research process, the fluidity of Indigenous knowledge must translate into a "broad range" of representations that surpass the use of the written form alone:

With re-storying in Indigenous methodologies, it is necessary to be mindful of Indigenous epistemology and the beliefs that Indigenous people hold about knowledge creation. In

short, knowledge arises from multiple and multidimensional sources, and through holistic, non-fragmented processes. Knowledge arises as a result of interconnectivity and has a fluidity and a movement to it. Thus, in Indigenous methodologies, the forms of re-storying and representation will be broad ranging. (p. 227)

Echoing this need for various multi-sensorial forms of knowledge representation, Wilson discussed how visual mediums can elucidate understanding:

Well, one thing I was thinking that is really interesting, oftentimes, when you talk to people, they use their hands when they're talking. Or, if you're around people, and they are drawing out things, or especially, people that do their lit. reviews, if you're sitting down and working with students on their lit. review, and you draw all the different areas, and then how they relate to each other with a bunch of squiggles on a whiteboard, it makes so much more sense that way. And I really like it when I get theses, or in papers that actually give you a diagram that shows you, here are all the little topics within my lit. review with little lines to show how they're related. Now I'm going to write it out. That visual part for me can be really important. And some people do that really well, and other people do not do it at all. But there are a lot of different ways that we can transmit information. So, writing is just one way. We can transmit information orally, but we also can transmit it visually.

Additionally, Wilson pointed out that we tend to value written forms of communication more in academia, but this bias narrows our perspective on what other media have to offer in terms of representing knowledge:

I'm well trained in how to read things and pick up understanding from written text; other people are really well trained in how to read things and pick up information from artwork;

other people are really trained well on how to pick up information from people's body language ... But we don't value all of those equally. We only value the written part for some reason. But I think if we expand our concept of how information gets transmitted, then we can start to think, "Oh, yeah, that's actually really demonstrating this bit of information really well." It's not in a format I'm used to, but it does a really good job of it.

Finally, to conclude this subtheme, Wilson used a specific example to illustrate this level of congruency. Nick Sousanis' published thesis (2018), *Unflattening*, denounces the fact that in western culture, the written word and the fixed viewpoint have primacy over any other form of knowledge transmission, but in having primacy over how knowledge is presented, they limit and narrow our perception. He presents his demonstration that there is a way of conceptualizing knowledge from multiple viewpoints visually through the form of a comic book. This example illustrates how when the *form*, *content*, and *nature* of the knowledge presented are congruent, the research gains so much robustness and integrity:

There's someone at Columbia University [Nick Sousanis] who did his doctoral thesis as a comic book. And it is, wow, so good. He called it Unflattening; you should look it up. It's talking about the visual representation of knowledge. And he has this congruence where he's talking about how knowledge can be demonstrated through a comic book, and he is really doing it, and it is really, really good.

Congruency as an Assessment Tool for Indigenous Research

One of the concrete ways to foster congruency in Indigenous research is by making sure that the foundations of any research project are compatible with the principles of Indigenous research. This could be done using an assessment tool that would support Indigenous partners

(communities and academics) in deciding in which research projects they want to participate. The assessment tool that I devised is a questionnaire that communities could give to researchers prior to engaging in a research collaboration. Answering these questions and considering all the components of Indigenous research (positionality, reciprocity, accountability, relevance, relationality) would force researchers to pause and consider what a collaborative Indigenous research approach means. The answers provided would then guide Indigenous partners in their decision-making process.

The idea of developing an assessment tool as a questionnaire came from my conversation with Rowe. She emphasized, in particular, how communities could easily use this to determine if they want to take part in a project or not, and how this could be the basis for starting a conversation, and a relational approach to research.

When I was reading the [scoping] review, I really felt like this is a missing piece that could really contribute to building that capacity and to making explicit, “Researchers, you answer these questions for us, you tell us this, and then we can have a conversation.”

Moreover, considering these questions before the research process begins also means that researchers that have completely defined all the components of a research project without any input from community partners would be stopped in their tracks and forced to reconsider this approach. Indeed, answering these questions would be part of the preparation phase of Indigenous research, which, as Rowe emphasized, should be a definite and hard “pre-requisite” to doing Indigenous research:

I think I wanted to go back to that internal process that researchers need to engage in order to have the basic fundamental pieces to be able to then work with an approach or even consider working on Indigenous research projects: “Who am I?”

“For what purpose am I doing this work?”

“Why am I doing this work?”

“What am I contributing?”

“What am I leaving behind?”

All of those different questions: “How do I know?”

“Have I done my own decolonial work?”

Education, history, all of those different pieces, I think those are just the really basic expectation of what it means to even think about working on a project with Indigenous peoples and communities.

Consequently, based on all my conversations with Indigenous scholars, I compiled a lengthy list of questions that could be asked of researchers. The list might seem long, but it is certainly not exhaustive. This list could be further adapted to specific contexts and areas of research (e.g., health, education, and social work). In any case, the list presented in this research constitutes a starting point. The goal is to develop a working tool that confronts researchers and leads them to question themselves and their motivations for doing Indigenous research. Nonetheless, the limitation to this assessment tool is that some researchers will not consider these questions honestly and wholeheartedly and will try to say what they think people want to hear in order to engage in a research partnership. Another drawback is that if it is too long, it will be impractical, therefore selecting maybe 10 to 15 key questions could probably be more helpful to Indigenous partners. Nonetheless, for the sake of this research, it was important to include everything that was mentioned as being important by Indigenous scholars. Lastly, another limitation is that many Indigenous communities and organization already have their own assessment tools to carefully

scrutinize the research projects that come their way and therefore, this questionnaire therefore might seem to them as redundant and irrelevant.

Below is a second list of questions similar to the first but for this one could be used to assess research projects that have already been completed and published. This compilation of questions came from discussing with researchers the “markers” of a research project that was done using an Indigenous paradigm, in contrast to research that was just “clothed” in Indigeneity.

PRINCIPLE	QUESTIONS (If there are several researchers, each should answer them).
Positionality	Who are you? What is your location? Who are your ancestors? What is your history? How do you come to know? What are your priorities? Why are you interested in doing this research? How does your position inform your research? What is your prior experience with Indigenous research? What do you consider has prepared you to do this type of work? Who are you in relation to the knowledge you want to learn more about? Why are you the right person to do this research? What makes you apt to do this research?
Relationality	What is your business with this community? Who are you in relation to the people you want to learn from? What prior relationships do you have with this community? What prior knowledge do you have of this community? What is your relationship to this land? How will you build relationships with community partners? How will you build relationships with knowledge holders? How will you build trust with this community?
Respect	Do you know how respect is expressed in this community? How will you enact respect during the research process? How will you respect the knowledge that is shared with you? How will you conduct this research in an ethical, conscious way? How will you make sure that every aspect of this project conforms to the ethics guidelines of the community?
Relevance/Accountability measures	Do you know what the priorities of this community are? How will you find out what are the priorities of this community? How is your research informed by these priorities? What is the relevance of your work to this community? How will you contribute to the welfare of this community (directly or indirectly)? What will you leave behind as the fruits of your research? How will you communicate the knowledge created in legible ways? What will you do with the knowledge you have gathered? Where will the funding come from? Where will the funding go? How will your research build capacity in this community? How will your research be centred in Indigenous voices and experiences?
Reciprocity	Do you know how reciprocity is expressed in this specific community? How will you enact reciprocity on a personal basis?

	How will you ask permission to use knowledge? How will you get consent from Elders? How will you give back, in specific ways, through this project?
Indigenous knowledge	What sort of Indigenous knowledge are you interested in researching/gathering? How will the Indigenous knowledge you have gathered inform your research? How will you guarantee that the sources of Indigenous knowledge are rightfully acknowledged? How will you protect the knowledge shared with you? How will you make sure that the knowledge shared with you is not distorted and misinterpreted? How will you guarantee that the collective ownership of this knowledge remains collective and Indigenous (OCAP—The First Nations principles of ownership, control, access, and possession –principles)? How will Indigenous knowledge inform your methods? Will you use certain teachings as the basis of your methodology? Which ones? And why?
Collaboration	How will you share power and decision-making with community partners? Do you have an advisory committee? Will you give community presentations to share your research process? Will you hold regular meetings to include research partners? How will you guarantee the meaningful participation of traditional knowledge keepers? What kind of policies does your institution have that support the meaningful sourcing of Indigenous knowledge keepers? Will you hold monthly meetings with Elders? Do you know what the proper protocols are to engage with Elders in this community?
Publications	How will you guarantee that the community stays informed? How will you make the research legible to community members? How will Elders or community partners be acknowledged in publications? How will their authorship be guaranteed?

This second list could be useful for academic readers reading research, for editorials and for grant committees. It could help them assess the strength of an Indigenous research project because, as Wilson had noted, “*the problem is that a lot of journals have yet not caught on what is ‘good’ Indigenous research.*” Furthermore, it is understood that this assessment tool is not to be used by individual researchers policing other academics and pointing finger at incongruent research. Again, the spirit of this assessment tool is reciprocity and accountability. The Indigenous principles that guide this questionnaire could also be used by graduate students as these constitute clear guidelines for any researcher seeking to engage in Indigenous research. In this way, this tool could be used specifically in research seminars on Indigenous research, as it is crucial, especially non-Indigenous researchers, to consider questions of positionality, epistemology and methodology.

Principle-based research	What principles of Indigenous research are identified in this research? Which principles are explicitly stated and are explained in how they will be <i>applied</i> in the specific land-based context of the research?
Indigenous knowledge	How was the permission to use Indigenous knowledge obtained? How was this knowledge accessed? How has the spiritual aspect of Indigenous knowledge informed this project? How was Indigenous knowledge protected in this project? How was the authorship of Indigenous knowledge identified and acknowledged? How did this research contribute to making Indigenous knowledge visible, and how did it combat the erasure of Indigenous knowing?
Positionality	Did the authors situate themselves? Their location? Their history? Their story? Did the authors identify their relationship to the land they are doing research in? Did the authors identify their relationship to Indigenous knowledge? Did the authors recognize their colonial baggage? Did the authors unpack their internalized colonialism? Did the authors identify how their positionality informs their methodology? Did the authors identify how their epistemic stance informs their theoretical framework? Did the researchers have a reputation in the community prior to doing this work? Did they discuss their past relationships with this community?
Relationality/ Relationship building	How were relationships built prior to starting the research process? For how long have these persons been known by the community? Did the authors do any work not research-related in this community? How many communities are part of this research project? How have researchers established meaningful connections with all these communities? How have the authors made their relationships to specific community members explicit in the research?
Relational accountability	How was permission obtained to do this research project? How was it presented to community partners? How did this project enact relational accountability to the Indigenous partners it engaged with? How was decision-making power shared with community partners? How was the co-creation of knowledge enacted in the research process? Were there any difficulties in maintaining good collaborations? Are these difficulties explained in the research? How was a community consultation space created and maintained through research process? How does this research project explicitly give credit to Indigenous partners? How did this research acknowledge the genealogy of knowledge?
Respect	How was the principle of respect demonstrated in this specific context? How did the author enact local protocols? Did the researchers seem knowledgeable about local cultural norms?
Writing/Publication	Who is the first author? Who are the other authors? Are community organizations, territories, or other Indigenous partners mentioned as authors? How is the source of Indigenous knowledge identified and acknowledged in the article? Writing style: Is the writing style disembodied? Is the voice of the author distanced from the topic? In what forms is the research presented? How are the methods presented? How are the results presented?

	Is there an effort to present knowledge in ways other than just a written form (e.g., visual component)? Are Indigenous components used to present the key findings of this research? Are these explained? Are they integral to the research, or do they seem placatory?
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Conclusion

Congruency is a principle that affects the overall quality, credibility, and value of research. In Indigenous research, connecting researcher positionality with epistemology, methodology, and local contexts is especially important. Achieving congruency in Indigenous research requires “epistemological awareness” (Koro-Ljungberg et al., 2009) and positional awareness. The need for congruent Indigenous research must be clear in the minds of all researchers seeking to do this kind of work, or they will be only be “presenting” as Indigenous and will fail to embody the founding principles of Indigenous research.

As was discussed at length, Indigenous knowledge systems are relational, holistic, fluid, and embodied ways of knowing. Indigenous research must reflect these qualities in myriad ways, it must go beyond fragmentation and embrace holism, and it must stay congruent with its roots. It is my conviction that if every research piece labelled Indigenous research were screened and evaluated for congruency, many studies would not pass the test, and many others would be further validated for having upheld congruency.

Chapter 7: In Conversation with Non-Indigenous Scholars

Introduction

This last chapter is a continuation of the preceding chapters and builds on the thematic analysis of the conversations with Indigenous scholars. The rationale for this chapter is that, if we have moved into an Indigenist phase that has integrated many non-Indigenous allies into its ranks, then it is important to consider their perspectives and motivations for doing this work. Additionally, if congruency must serve as a strategy to assess good research, then we must consider what this means for non-Indigenous researchers.

For this phase of the consultations, eight non-Indigenous researchers were invited to participate in these discussions, but only two agreed to talk with me. Most of the researchers I invited considered that a theoretical and methodological study on Indigenous research should be conducted mainly with Indigenous researchers. Consequently, this chapter will be based on only two conversations. Furthermore, these researchers preferred to remain anonymous and not to be quoted as experts in Indigenous research. To respect their anonymity, I use the code names Ann and Beatrice. Each researcher had a chance to review their conversation transcript and edit it to remove any names that could identify them. However, these edits make these conversations no less valuable, as they corroborate and add insights to what was said by Indigenous researchers.

First, following the structure of Chapter 4, this chapter discusses relationships and positionality. Second, following the structure of Chapter 5, the academic milieu is discussed. Third, mirroring Chapter 6, congruency is discussed from a non-Indigenous perspective.

Theme One: Relationships

The first topic of our conversation with Ann and Beatrice concerns what initially drew and motivated them to work with Indigenous peoples. This is a crucial question because Indigenous research is intimately linked to Indigenous positionality, to reclaiming a voice for Indigenous people, and to making Indigenous epistemologies visible (Absolon, 2011; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). This first question also ties into the theme of relationships because the answers explored how bonds were created that would be strong enough for non-Indigenous researchers to be accepted by Indigenous communities to do this kind of work.

Ann's Entry and Journey into Indigenous research

Ann finished her master's and was invited to work for the Anishinabek Nation. The professional skills that she had acquired through her studies were of interest to this organization, as they would support the Indigenous governance of Ontario First Nations. This contract with the Anishinabek Nation lasted more than two years. This naturally led her to develop relationships with First Nation members and with the leadership. It was during this experience working in the field that she decided to go further and do her PhD: *"I have an opportunity here to actually pay attention to what Indigenous communities are doing instead of questioning what Canada is doing."* Relationships were key in making this decision: *"I had worked for them for two and a half years, so I was invested. I was around; I was there. So, yeah, I think that makes a difference."* This concords with Wilson's and Lee's discussions concerning the importance of building relationships and trust *prior* to doing Indigenous research, and this was also Ann's experience:

So, you know already the leadership, I already knew people, so it was easy to be like, "Hey, I'm back doing this research. Can we talk?"

So, if I had just been cold, just coming in, it wouldn't have been so good.

Furthermore, Ann's work engagement is also the best way for a community to get to know a researcher and to test a person's commitment to its priorities. Looking further into Ann's past, she also shared that she grew up just outside North Bay, where she went to school with First Nations kids and had First Nations friends at school. This fact is important because it means that being in relation with First Nations is part of her history and location, and good Indigenous–non-Indigenous relations are not a given in this country. On the contrary, they often follow what Dwayne Donald calls “Fort Logics” (2013).

According to Donald (2013), Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples have been made to remain distant and separate in Canada, inhabiting different realities and spaces, because of the logic and dynamic of the foundational Canadian “Fort.” In this paradigm, civilization came to the New World and stands guard inside the “Fort,” where it fences off the “wild Indian” threatening it from the outside. The Fort Logic creates a dichotomy of “good” vs. “evil” and of “wild” vs. “civilized” that puts settlers and Indigenous people forever at odds. This stance was further perpetuated and reinforced by policies such as the *Indian Act*, which created the reserve system, and by the school history curriculum, which perpetuated the idea that Indigenous peoples are outside the limits of civilization. Therefore, it is noteworthy that for Ann, school and especially sports created a meeting point that countered these Fort Logics:

I'm friends with people from high school who are members of N. First Nation; we were friends in grade eight. We're still friends now on Facebook, and now I have another way to invite them to interview. I'm also from that area, so I worked for the “Union of Ontario Indians” that is located just beside North Bay. I grew up just outside North Bay. So, I went to the school for all the rural kids and the First Nation kids in North Bay. ... And you know what, sports are a big deal in a lot of Indigenous youth empowerment, youth programming.

I think sports and the arts are important ways of engaging Indigenous youth and life promotion work. And I remember, we had won “Athlete of the Year” in grade eight, and so did that Facebook friend of mine that I’m talking about ... I think it gives you a way to keep showing up. You’re not just disappearing; you’re involved with people ... so, I really like your idea of the meeting point and how they might be like really obvious and really directly related sometimes and sometimes maybe not so directly related but are a meeting point.

In sum, we can safely say that prior childhood relationships led Ann to easily establish work relationships with First Nation members, which were then deepened through collaborative research because,

You don’t have to be Indigenous to do good Indigenist research, but what you have to be in some kind of meaningful responsible reciprocal relationship with actual Indigenous people.

In Ann’s life, these relationships make up her Indigenous relational knowledge, and it is clear that this took her further than if she simply had book knowledge because her experiences with “real” Indigenous people were personal and emotional experiences that created long-lasting connections. Book knowledge, for all its worth, remains impersonal; it can give one background knowledge, but it cannot replace learning in community with people. Additionally, book knowledge might give a researcher the impression of being an expert, when the core of Indigenous knowledge is shared through relationships. Ann observed this lack of relational knowledge first-hand in some of her non-Indigenous colleagues, which created awkwardness or overconfidence when relating to Indigenous peoples:

A lot of non-Native people I know, either they're really nervous and they won't engage at all, or if they're the confident type, and they'll be like, "Oh, well, I know all this stuff," and I find it's either one or the other. And the ones who are too scared to engage because they feel nervous, and they might be too timid, and they would wait forever, and they might not know that they can actually just start talking and suggest something and then listen and chat. And because they don't want to overstep, they'll be hyper timid, but then you got the other ones, who are the opposite.

Beatrice's Journey into Indigenous Research

In a completely different context, like Ann, Beatrice entered into relationships with Indigenous people by "accident." It was her work in northern territories that first led Beatrice to meet Inuit leaders. The initial connection was strong, and this got Beatrice interested in learning more about Indigenous issues. She discovered how these issues and the struggle of Inuit people strongly resonated with her own convictions:

I started doing research within Inuit by accident ... So back in 1992 or '93, I was a researcher with the Canadian Panel on Violence against Women. And I went up to Northern BC and Northern Alberta to interview survivors of violence, perpetrators of violence, and service providers. The panel had an Aboriginal, they called it, an "Aboriginal Circle," and on that Circle was the President of Pauktuutit at that time, and in our research unit, we had somebody who would later become executive director of Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada. So, basically, I ended up doing a lot of the Indigenous-based background research and worked with C. D. S., who was also on the Aboriginal Circle, and she later became executive director of Native Women's Association of Canada. So, that was actually my, one of the first exposures, not the first, but the first in-depth stuff

that I did on Indigenous issues, violence, and trauma. And I was shocked at that time; that's when I learned about residential schools and the effects of colonization. And so that had an impact on me. I've always, my whole life has been devoted to advancing social justice, and particularly gender equity, particularly focusing on the issues of violence and poverty. And wherever I looked on the issues of violence and poverty, there were Indigenous people. They were Indigenous women. So, I tried to learn as much as possible about those issues. And because of the Inuit connection, I paid particular attention to Inuit.

Beatrice continued to explain how these initial connections created trust and reciprocity, which then led her to engage concretely and work for Inuit organizations:

Later, I guess it was 2008 or so, Tracy at Pauktuutit needed a contract researcher she could trust to do work on survivors of child sexual abuse, Inuit survivors, and to come up with an action plan and the communications plan. So, I did some work with them, co-facilitated a workshop that was multi-sectoral, mainly made up of Inuit, and talked to Inuit health and social service providers across Inuit territories. Basically, like, Pauktuutit wanted this research done. And I was a tool, an instrument of Pauktuutit to do what they wanted.

Beatrice described her role and what she brought to the research as an “*intermediary*.” She brought academic skills (writing), but more fundamentally, her relationship has been one of “*listening*” and “*translating*.” This is very important because it denotes humility, the opposite of the stance of the expert, and it also implies an attitude of learning and willingness to create space for Inuit needs to be heard. This also suggests that, for her, the experts on Inuit knowledge and issues are the Inuit themselves:

Basically, my relationship has just been one of listening. What I bring to the table, what Inuit organizations bring to the table is their research needs, and their knowledge, their knowledge of their own experience, and what I bring to the table is recognized academic research skills and writing skills. And I just listen, I listen, and I write down what people say, and I put it in the context of the academic literature. I have the facility to do the types of searches that governments and funders and whatever they think is valuable, so basically, I can write proposals and I can put it in the language, I can try to translate what the needs are of the organizations into what the funders will actually pay for. And so, I feel that I'm a kind of intermediary, I have a foot in both camps. But the foot, it's not really a foot in the Inuit camp; it's an ear. My job is to listen.

Beatrice's description of her role could serve as a definition of what being an ally really means: someone who puts their skills in the service of Indigenous peoples' needs and priorities while maintaining a humble listening and learning stance. Moreover, Beatrice's testimony echoes very strongly what Wilson Danard said concerning allies:

Wilson Danard (DDW): Indigenous people don't really want those kinds of allies.

Jimena Márquez (JM): Which ones?

DDW: The pushy questioning allies. You know what I mean? We want the ones that are just willing to just listen ... more listening allies, you know, as opposed to, as opposed to, a second invasion of allies. Think they all got off the boat, running over, like, "I want to be an ally, what do we do?" We are like, "Go sit down. Go sit with the land." People really need to build those relationships beyond a Canadian construction; it's all challenging.

Over the years, Beatrice's journey into Indigenous research has continued to be driven by her relationships to Inuit people:

Most of my research was initiated by Inuit organizations who hired me. T. I. hired me to work with an Inuit advisory committee and do some consultations to develop Inuit-specific curriculum materials for grades 4 to 10. I've worked with N. T. for the past six years, helping them navigate through thousands of pages of government documents written in bureaucratic language and juxtaposing things that are really important to Inuit with things that are completely irrelevant. And so, knowing what the organization wants information about, my job is to pull out what is of interest to Inuit and how that information can be used to advance Inuit employment. So, the postdoc, even though that was initiated by me because I wanted to do a postdoc, I went to Pauktuutit and asked them, "What research do you want and need?"

Beatrice's attitude of allyship was also developed knowing well that the context of research in the Canadian Arctic has been one of disrespect for the Inuit. Beatrice retold a clear example of what academic research *on* Inuit people looks like as opposed to relationship-led research *with* Inuit people:

I think in Nunavut, if you want to do research in a community, you are supposed to apply for a license, which will ask you about, there's a document about doing research in Nunavut communities. And it's a really good document, and I use those principles. But I have never done research in just one community. It's made to prevent what happened in the past. I'll give you an example where there were some researchers; I guess this must have been about 20 years ago or more. They were doing research on PCBs [Polychlorinated biphenyls] in breast milk. So, they went up to an Inuit community and got people's breast milk, tested it, and they found high levels of PCB. And the women found out only when the media phoned the community after the researchers made some public

announcement. And then they were left not knowing whether they should breastfeed, should they continue to breastfeed or not, or what; the researchers never bothered to go back and explain the results to people. So, there are so many stories like that, Inuit in communities just being used by researchers.

Relationship with Indigenous Knowledge

Trust, reciprocity and working with Indigenous people can also lead a researcher to create a relationship with Indigenous knowledge itself. The relationship with Indigenous knowledge is also one that takes time to build. Wilson explained this using the example of how stories have different layers and choose to reveal themselves over time:

Stories can have multiple layers depending on how you look at the story. I would say that's also how knowledge itself is expressing its agency in its relationship with you; it is choosing when to reveal itself. So, sometimes that knowledge will reveal itself to you right away. If you're ready to receive the knowledge, it will come to you really quickly. And sometimes that knowledge is just going to sit in the back of your brain, until you're ready to hear it; then it will become available to you as usable knowledge. (Wilson in Coburn, 2021)

[This is something that happened to Ann. During her time working at the Anishinabek Nation, stories were shared, and the same stories were often repeated. In this way, they seeped into her consciousness. She shares how, over the course of 10 years, their meaning slowly revealed itself:

I remember when I was working at the Union [of Indians of Ontario] somebody came in and was telling us these stories, these Nanabush stories, and a lot of the people I work with have already heard them before. For me, it was the first time ever hearing these particular stories, and I was laughing so much because they're really funny, the trickster figure, and

he gets in all these predicaments, and I'm laughing. So, these stories are being shared, I'm laughing so much, but no one else is because they have probably heard them already. But you know, as time goes by, I've heard them more and more and now I'm like, "Oh yeah, Nanabush, the Trickster," and I even think about that now in terms of life and how there's always messy, tricky, confusing stuff that happens; that's what it means to be human, and I think about those stories as soothing, and I think differently now. The whole concept is a little bit different now from when I first heard the stories 10 years ago.

Paradoxically, the direct experience of and relationship with Indigenous knowledge leads researchers to adopt the opposite of the expert attitude; it leads them to approach their role in collaborative Indigenous research with more humility. Therefore, non-Indigenous researchers who have this experience are likely to be more flexible and better listeners rather than to impose their western way of doing things on a project:

There's going to be things that I can look into, there's going to be things someone else can look into. I am not going to be able to do what they do the same way. So, that's fine, I think that having, knowing the limits is actually so helpful because it keeps you in your lane, and then you can just do that thing that you're qualified to do and that you're ready for, that you're prepared for ... it is dynamic in that way, being situated in that space because the limits are helpful. They just help what you're doing. You know they always talk about, "Everyone has gifts," and it's about, life is about figuring out what your gifts are and how you're going to give back. So, I think the limits help; you know what you are doing, what's the purpose. How are you invited to participate in this? Who are you? It all helps you to figure out what your role is, which changes over time.

In her work, Ann does exactly what Wilson said about living according to the principles of Indigenous research. Her stance of self-inquiry, reflecting constantly on the gifts that she brings to the table, shows that the goal of her research is not the advancement of her career but rather serving the needs of the community:

And that's the relational aspect: how it always depends on who you are and what you bring to the table and whether the community can use it, or not use it, how they can engage. I think that's the whole point.

Ann also added that, in her mind, Indigenist research must be not only relevant but also legible to community members. This ties into the relationship with knowledge because legible research is about sharing with community; it expresses reciprocity and respect and maintains the relationship. For Ann, this sharing of information was part of her relationship with Indigenous peoples prior to doing academic research.

She explained how, during her two-year work contract, she made sure the community knew what she was doing there:

So, people are sharing stuff with you and then you're sitting with it and digesting it, and then ideally you're sharing it back in multiple spaces, so, not just in an academic article or a conference paper that you are reading, and it goes over everyone's head, but can you describe it and talk about it in everyday ways to the people that you spoke to, but also to everyday people like your parents? So, it has to be legible.

There is actually a tangible thing that speaks to that when I was writing the dissertation ... so, I just had the idea to write these shorter pieces for the N. First Nation newsletter... I went through all my interviews, and I came up with these six vignettes. And those would also become my six chapters. So, I suppose writing for community first made sure I could

say what the point was in this much text, and then I blew them open for the academic version. And I feel like that was extremely helpful, and I probably got the idea because when I worked with the Anishinabek Nation, part of my job was to write these monthly articles for Anishinabek News that had to tie somehow to the themes, the recommendations that we were working with ... So, I knew that Anishinabek News was always looking for content, people read it, again, it gets your name out there, you're still part, you're still involved. So, even when I was back at university, I kept writing for them once in a while when something was happening. And so that was extremely useful because it's one of those moments where you get to speak back. So, I think that is a tangible example, and to summarize the relational and about being reciprocal, the sharing. People share with me. I share back.

What Ann was talking about when she said that research much be “legible” corresponds to what Kovach (2017) says concerning the intelligibility of the “Re-storying: Interpretation and Presentation” phase of Indigenous research. She states that “In whatever manner is chosen, the findings and representation within Indigenous methodologies must also be accessible to the Indigenous community” (p. 228). This corresponds to the “Uncle Paul” principle that must be present in Indigenous research:

A good indicator whether your research is relevant and makes sense to the community is the extent Uncle Paul and/or Auntie Doris get what you are saying about your research: What are you saying? Why does it matter? Why are you presenting it the way you are? (p. 128)

In the case of Beatrice, Inuit knowledge became more and more familiar as her relationships and collaborations deepened over the years, to the point that the principles underlying Inuit traditional

knowledge have become fundamental to all the research she does. However, she never claimed to own this knowledge but rather explained that she has used Inuit principles in research as a way of giving voice to Inuit people:

We try to use Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit in our research. It literally translates as “What Inuit have always known”; it’s based on cooperation and working together, a spirit of welcoming and openness and respect for the land. ... IQ principles are respect and a caring attitude for others; being welcoming to others; being open in communications and inclusive to build good relationships; working together for a common purpose; care for the environment; skills and knowledge acquisition; being resourceful to solve problems; consensus decision-making; and serving. For Inuit to survive in the Arctic for thousands of years, they developed tools, but they also developed a culture of cooperation; you have to help each other to live. One day, somebody’s hunt is going to be successful, and other people’s is not, so you share whatever you get. So, there are some things that are just fundamental to ways of working. Those things are still evident in some ways, like the sharing of food, but some people may have lost interpersonal skills because of the intergenerational effects of residential schools and day schools which interrupted the culture.

I feel an obligation as a researcher to bring, to acknowledge and respect what Inuit already know, and to facilitate Inuit having a strong voice in the research. I think that’s one of your questions about Indigenous knowledge, “Are you appropriating Indigenous knowledge?” I never claim that Inuit knowledge is mine. I never publish anything I do not have permission to publish. Most of the research I do is initiated by Inuit organizations and full copyright is given to the organization and is not even published with my name on it.

Beatrice's conceptualization of Inuit knowledge echoes what Battiste and Henderson (2008) say: one of the main principles of Indigenous research is that Indigenous peoples should control their own knowledge and own their research.

Lastly, as in the case of Ann, Beatrice's exposure to IQ, over the years, had a deep impact on her, and she explained how her research approach is informed by Inuit knowledge:

I do use IQ in research projects, but I credit Inuit for that and discuss with Inuit colleagues what each principle means for our research. I don't claim that I invented IQ, but those principles have affected me in terms of how I do research, even in research that is not about Inuit. Because they're just good values, like being open and inclusive; respect for the environment is one of them. I've never heard an Inuk say, "It's only Inuit who should be respectful of the environment."

This section on a researcher's relationship with Indigenous knowledge demonstrates how these non-Indigenous researchers have developed their own relationships with Indigenous values and teachings and *live* by them, doing exactly what Wilson said is Indigenist and reconciliatory research.

Theme Two: Positionality

This section focuses on the idea that reflecting on positionality is *as* important for non-Indigenous researchers as it is for Indigenous researchers. The main difference lies in the kind of answers that will arise from this reflection, but the process that Absolon (2011) speaks about in her chapter on "The Centre of the Petal Flower" is the same. As Lee stated, doing Indigenous research may be harder for a non-Indigenous person because their positionality could work against them.

For Ann, reflecting on positionality is “dynamic” and it is most linked to relationality. She explained how positionality and relationality feed each other in a constant “back and forth” because the answer to the question “Who am I?” is always in relation to somebody or something.

All the different things that we’ve talked about, if you had to sum it up: relationality. And I guess a lot of that reflection, the researcher reflection piece, like having a lot of that going on in the background, but not just that, I think maybe that’s the thing: if you’re just reflecting and you become one of the timid people that doesn’t do anything, that’s not great. So, I think the relational part is an important piece to highlight because it’s not just about researcher reflection – Margaret Kovach writes about this – it’s about reflection and being active: active in an engaged, dynamic way, that’s continually kind of back and forth, and is also positionality. (Ann)

Ann retold how this reflection on positionality came not from her western upbringing or training but from working with the Anishinabek Nation:

My family has Indigenous ancestry that I am interested in learning about, but we are French Canadian. I remember when I got the job at the Union of Ontario Indians, people would say “Who are your people?” And that was way back, so identity has been an ongoing thing since I had worked there. white people never asked me, “Who are your people?” I don’t think anyone had ever asked me (in that way), “Where are you from?” “Where are you from?” But I got that job, and I remember my boss took me around to everyone, to meet everyone, and I got that question from everyone. So, I was like, “Okay, this is a totally different way of thinking, of placing someone you know.” And, so, the question of identity has always been on my mind because you’re asked right away, “Who are you?” “Who is this person that’s working here now?”

Therefore, before Ann started her academic journey, she had already started the preparatory work required to do Indigenist research. She had started building her relationship with a specific First Nation, with a specific land-based Indigenous knowledge, and she had started reflecting on her location. This building up of relationships was reflected later in the “Treaty” theoretical framework she used for her research:

I remember when I read that [the question sent in advance on the use of theoretical frameworks] the first time, I wrote down “Treaty” and then I wrote down “Origin Stories” and then I wrote down “Belonging” because those are three very specific frameworks that I’ve operated within at different times depending on the context, the purpose of the projects. “Treaty,” that was from the work with the Anishinabek Nation. ... I was learning about “Treaty” and then that was useful and made sense in a million different ways to the context at N. First Nation ... Ipperwash is not just about Indigenous people; it’s about non-Indigenous people learning about treaty, so many reasons why I felt that that would be like an appropriate ethical, doable position. And then they said, “We already make decisions.” So, forget that! But then, I was like, okay, so then the research question will be basically to document or understand the multiple relationships between knowledge and governance at N., and that keeps it open, so that’s “Treaty.” And then later, “Treaty” became more than about just the Crown. I started to hear more and more about the “First Treaties,” which are with Creation. And because treaty is a problematic thing in the sense of the Crown’s violation of them, and their use as colonial mechanisms, but that’s not what I mean by “Treaty”. I’ve always meant “Treaty” as based in Indigenous legal orders... “Treaty”, which is about, it’s a spiritual “covenant,” and not only that, “Treaty Protocol” comes from the beginning of time. They talk about that; human beings have treaties with

the earth. So that's what I mean, "Treaty" was more about a legible way of thinking about an Indigenous constitutional order through which non-native people can see the land, rather than through the Canadian Constitution or Settler logics.

This "Treaty" perspective is a good example of a congruent theoretical framework that aligns with the researcher's relational epistemic stance, with the researcher's "settler" positionality, and with her location in Canadian history and land and that also encompasses her position within Indigenous epistemologies. This theoretical stance also allowed Ann to establish an ethical and accountable position for working with N. First Nations. Furthermore, it through was her conversations with First Nations leaders that she came to appreciate the many layers that exist within the Indigenous epistemology of Treaty.

Finally, Ann explained the natural progression in her reflection on position and how it came about through her interviews in a natural, relational way:

So, that was a very specific thing [Treaty] and then that moved into "Origin Stories" and "Creation Stories" because of my interviews. ... And then "Belonging" comes up in the interviews, so now I'm thinking about how people belong to a place. So, it's all a progression and it comes from what people have said; it's not coming from my head, it's not coming from an invention, or it's not coming just from stuff I've read. It's just coming from people looking at me and saying stuff to me and then I go, "Oh yeah." So, it's very relational.

Beatrice discussed how reflecting on positionality meant considering what it means to be a Settler, but from an immigrant's perspective. This implies reflecting on where she comes from and what ideas she carried about Indigenous peoples:

Location. I have no idea how to answer that question. I don't call myself anything. I am a Settler. My father was Greek from Egypt; he was an immigrant to Canada. He came in the late '50s. My mother was Francophone from rural Quebec. I was essentially, I suppose, luckier than some other Canadians because many white Canadians have grown up with real racism towards Indigenous peoples. But I grew up with a perspective common in Europe today. My father thought that Indigenous peoples in Canada were special and close to the land and those types of stereotypes. It's, it's a form of racism, but at least it's not a form of racism that assumes terrible things. ...

Furthermore, Beatrice assumed responsibility for her position as Settler without resistance and guilt, but rather with lucidity and responsibility:

A lot of people resist that label [Settler], and say, well, "My ancestors weren't even here," or "I am not my ancestors," "I didn't personally do those things." But all of us living here on this land who are not Indigenous are benefiting from a system that has shortchanged, that's an understatement, Inuit, Métis, and First Nations. The reason why Inuit are in the position that they are is because Canada invested in non-Indigenous Canadians for the past 75 years, invested in housing, education, healthcare, infrastructure, socioeconomic development, and they left Inuit out. So, I benefited from those, from that infrastructure that's all around me whereas people in northern communities have not. And so, I accept the Settler label. So yes, I'm a Settler. I have benefited, I realize and acknowledge that other people have been subject to brutal colonial policies, and I have an obligation to do whatever I can to help people heal from that trauma and build justice.

I also asked Beatrice whether she considered herself to be an ally, and she rightly answered that actions should speak for a person, not labels:

I have no objection to calling myself an ally. I want to be and aim to be an ally. But I feel that it's up to Inuit, First Nations, and Métis to decide whether or not I am, in fact, an ally. It's not up to me to decide that. Maybe I've been helpful, and maybe I have not. Maybe people will judge that I've been helpful now, but maybe they'll have a different perspective later. So, these labels are not that important to me. What's important to me is to do something. And to acknowledge that I grew up in a white middle-class family, in a house full of books in three languages, and that had an impact on me, and that's why I have a PhD now. I've gone into homes that have no books, where people struggle with literacy. That could have been me if I had been born to a different family. I have an obligation to pay it forward.

Beatrice explained that the essence of allyship for her lies in the role of the translator. This is significant because it is connected to how she defined her relationship to Inuit people, as a listener. Consequently, when transformed into action, listening becomes translation; it creates a bridge between two worlds:

It's important in my research to always talk about colonialization and its effects. I don't know if you saw that piece about suicide prevention. What was totally missing from the academic literature was the Inuit point of view on suicide prevention. So again, I feel it's part of my role to be a "translator." I'm trying to connect these two worlds that are not really connected but need to be connected. Inuit knowledge needs to be represented in all research concerning Inuit and the North. I would love to have the opportunity to mentor Inuit students interested in becoming researchers. The funding isn't usually there for that, at least not anything I can access. I have paid Inuit out of my own salary to work with me on projects.

Beyond the labels of Settler and ally, Beatrice's positionality lies in her relationships to Inuit people and the trust that has been built over time:

There's a reason why organizations approach me to do the work, because they know me, they know that I will do it in a respectful manner and produce something that's useful to them. You build up a relationship over time, people get to know and trust you, and you never betray that trust.

Another interesting thing Beatrice spoke about is personality and how it is seldom discussed within the topic of positionality. For her, personality is a determining criterion and should be taken into account more when talking about Indigenous research:

And one thing with positionality that is never really mentioned is the matter of "personality." Some people just don't have the personality to do this kind of work effectively. Some people just come across as arrogant or whatever. They're obtuse; they might be hearing but they're not listening well; or they might have these fixed ideas in their head that they really want to put in the thing. And they're not willing to be open. Some of these people can go to a thousand workshops and know intellectually what they are supposed to do but do not have the distance from their own words and actions, the empathy for others, the ability to read social cues or to really internalize cultural sensitivity. They think they are culturally sensitive when they are not. Some even think they are "experts" on cultural sensitivity because they took a few workshops. I know, the Tri-Council guidelines, there's a chapter on doing work with Indigenous communities, and the chapter is good, and it deals with at least some of those issues, but I think some people continue to be incapable, with the personality that they have, of doing this kind of research well and of really being inclusive.

Lastly, Beatrice's comment on personality can be related to what Absolon identified as internalized colonialism. In our conversation, Absolon mentioned how everyone wants to do Indigenous research but needs to unpack their internalized colonialism first; otherwise, even if they want to do research inclusively, they cannot because certain ways of being and doing research are too ingrained in them.

Theme Three: The Academic Environment

Ann describes academia as a “*bad space*” in the sense that it does not encourage a relational approach to research and tokenizes Indigenous faculty:

When I was working with the Anishinabek Nation, outside of academia, before academia, that has a lot of value because academia is such a bad space. It really is. Unless you're in a little enclave, you have the best supervisor and the best department, but if you're not in that situation, the norms and assumptions and the values of academia, especially in this whole reconciliation and the TRC ... institutions are really bad at tokenizing and just being actually really insulting and really harmful, and I think Indigenous academics have been saying that for a long time.

Ann further contrasted learning directly from the community to learning within academia, which supports her point that academia is a “*bad space*.” She also brought up the idea of “*old school*” institutions, which could refer to what Absolon called the Gatekeepers and Fences:

If I was only introduced to Indigenous worldviews, governance, etc., through the university, I would be in a “bad place” is what I'm saying. Unless, again, you were in the right department, the right institution which has really good relationships with Indigenous communities, really good; you know, where they really prioritize Indigenous governance and self-determination within the university. But I'm at U of ..., which is your “old school,”

really kind of “white institution,” and I haven’t seen meaningful engagement by the university with Indigenous communities. I mean yes, I have here and there, but again it’s led by individuals ... I just wanted to say that I feel that’s an important thing, is having an education outside of academia because academia can lead people, I think, can lead people in a very narrow [experience]

The narrowness of academic learning that Ann talks about can be nuanced by the fact that some progressive institutions, such as the University of Victoria (according to Green), are integrating more land-based Indigenous education. But the point Ann made, like Wilson Danard, is that academia is not the best environment in which to learn about Indigenous realities and epistemologies. This brings up the paradox discussed in the previous chapter about presenting Indigenous knowledge systems in publications when these are oral, land-based traditions.

Publications

Looking more specifically at the paradox of publishing within an Indigenous research paradigm, Ann also pointed out something that Wilson had noted: sometimes, an article seems to be disembodied through no fault of the researcher. It is rather connected to editorial guidelines and the style encouraged by the journal:

When I read your [conversation] guide, and you wrote around the epistemological theoretical frameworks being general or loose or vague, I had never really noticed that because I read a lot of good stuff that I just love and so I’m like, “This is so good,” and so it’s normal to think about things in a concrete way. And then the extreme other version is people that don’t know anything, and you know, and that’s really obvious that they don’t know anything. But I don’t really feel like I’m one to judge or to say because maybe some

people, maybe it's a style that's changed over time. I don't know, that'd be interesting for your research: What journals are they writing in? Who are the audience?

On the other hand, for Beatrice, publications are definitely an important part of a researcher's career, and for her it is as important to respect Indigenous people's ownership of the knowledge produced during research than it is to publish under one's own name:

I do research for a lot of different kinds of government agencies, departments, organizations, and I always try to retain copyright so that I can publish the work, except with Indigenous organizations. The copyright is theirs, and sometimes my name doesn't even appear on it. So, I can't take credit for that work. It is not even really possible for an academic researcher to put three years into a project and then not be able to publish anything because that's not how universities are structured. It's as if they have done nothing.

Beatrice's approach to publication on Indigenous research projects is congruent with her relationship with Inuit people and also echoes what Indigenous researchers have said, that communities should retain ownerships of the results of the research.

Working in the "Era of Reconciliation"

Concerning the TRC, Ann agreed with Indigenous researchers that institutions are preoccupied with decolonization and Indigenization because of the political context, because these aims position them as being progressive:

I think all these universities want to come across as being so "reconciliation." So, departments, universities, they all want to say, "Oh yeah, we're doing the work of reconciliation." I think a lot of it, I think a lot of the present stuff is probably related to that, but I feel like some of the senior, more senior Indigenous scholars that are out there,

hopefully you've talked to some of them, because they would be able to give you more of that history, of how things have changed even in the span of their career.

On the other hand, Beatrice sees Indigenous research as a recent research “trend” and she expressed that this could lead to bad research experiences, similar to the ones that occurred 20 years ago in which there was no relationality:

I'm afraid that more academic researchers who are not really interested in the relationship building will try to do research on Indigenous peoples because it's in the “news,” because there's funding available, because they think that this is the trend or whatever. And that's a danger. Inuit have had such bad experiences with these.

Collaborations

When we discussed what constitutes good research collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations and peoples, Ann underlined that if universities want to encourage Indigenous research and good collaborations with Indigenous communities, they must recognize that Indigenous knowledge systems have their own process of vetting or accreditation. And, she underlined, this is one of the great difficulties of Indigenous research: there is a discrepancy in the vetting systems of each community. Moreover, this ties into how knowledge production is understood. This divergence in worldviews, this difference of values, norms, and goals between academic institutions and Indigenous communities, is therefore what renders good collaborations difficult:

So that's the kind of model, that's the kind of different thinking where you're going to get collaborations that are actually good because there's vetting, so it's like this vetting. Okay, that's important. Something about vetting, academia has its system of vetting. Well Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous knowledge systems have a system of vetting too, and

the universities don't understand that system. They operate on their system. The norms and values, the assumptions, processes, and practices. You know everything, how meetings are conducted, how research is done, what's seen as valuable, outputs, focus on outputs and being fancy, you know, like "What's relationship building?" How is that understood in a university "pipeline of excellence"? It's nothing. It is seen as "whatever"... So, I think there's a vetting that has to happen. Some First Nations have their own ethics and research protocols; that's the kind of stuff that's been a help, so that all the pressure isn't on, whether it's the community or whether it's the one Indigenous faculty member ... Another one is if you're invited. So that's a thing, when you're invited, so, if a collaboration starts from that, you know, that's probably another indication that it is probably more collaborative than not.

When discussing the issue of academic credentials, Beatrice used the example of the government of Nunavut to discuss how the education requirements made of Inuit do not acknowledge the history of Canadian colonialism and its impacts on Indigenous people's ability to get the necessary credentials to access certain positions:

So about academic credentials. So, the Nunavut government was created 20 years ago; at that point, it was made up of 50% Inuit, and they were supposed to raise that to 85%. Do you know how much it is now? It's still 50%. They've made zero progress. They hired a lot of people, but the proportion of Inuit to non-Inuit is the same, and a lot of the Inuit are concentrated at the lower end of things. One of the key issues is this academic qualification issue. Inuit still do not have the same access to education as white people. And education is not trauma-informed, and it needs to be. People who have gone through trauma may

need extra support or to deal with those issues, not just to be left floundering thinking that they're not good.

Additionally, in terms of what is the basis for good collaborations, Beatrice insisted on the point she had already made, that the knowledge and expertise of Inuit people in Inuit research must be recognized:

I always work with Inuit, on Inuit projects, because they have perspectives and expertise that I don't have. An Inuk colleague who does mental health work told me Inuit are sick of hearing bad news. She says everyone's always trying to research Inuit because they think they're the worst, or they have the most problems or whatever, but Inuit need to hear good news about Inuit strength, about what Inuit are doing to resolve situations, not just documenting terrible experiences. Those are documented enough.

This perspective on collaboration is anchored in the principles of relationality and reciprocity. As Beatrice explains, this is still not the standard, and Southern Canadians have many misconceptions regarding the North because of all the faulty research:

A lot of the research that does not include an Inuit perspective makes really silly assumptions that are based on the resources available to white people in Southern Canada. An example I have seen is that some Inuit are not willing to travel to get work, without the acknowledgement that actually, a lot of Inuit, particularly women, are the social services in their communities. They're looking after kids, they're looking after elderly people, people with disabilities, they're providing services to everyone because there are no services in many communities as there are in the south. So no, many Inuit can't leave. But many Inuit do leave as well because of overcrowded housing, no safety from violence, and few educational or job opportunities. Research that doesn't understand the Inuit context

will lead to faulty conclusions and will not acknowledge Inuit strengths and actions in a context that few other Canadians experience.

Furthermore, for Beatrice, Indigenous collaborative research should include both quantitative and qualitative research. This is significant because Indigenous research is usually not quantitative, but for Beatrice, both approaches should be used for the benefit of communities and should follow the same guidelines:

I would approach quantitative research the same way as I approach qualitative research: with the participation of the people who are going to be studied, with the questions that they want to know, and how would they put those questions. So quantitative research to me is not some evil thing that should be thrown out. You use the same considerations as you would do qualitative research. Just because you count the answers doesn't make it bad. I find that quantitative and qualitative research are best used together to give a better depth of understanding of the issues and the range of people affected by the issues.

Theme Four: Strategies to Assess Indigenous Research

At the time of our conversations, I presented to Ann and Beatrice the idea that finding internal coherence between positionality, epistemology, and methodology would be a valuable tool to assess what constitutes good Indigenous research. I also pointed out that this internal coherence or congruency would be evident in the preparatory work of researchers, especially in terms of critical self-reflection and relationship building with Indigenous communities. To this idea of inner preparedness and internal coherence, Ann added, echoing something that Lavallee had said, that it is also important to “follow the money,” to see where the funds for these projects are really going. Ann was pointing to a level of congruency between action and speech, of “putting your money where your mouth is”:

Rauna Kuokkanen, she is Sami, she writes about “Indigenous Epistemes as a gift,” and she talks about how universities are not really ready to receive the gifts of Indigenous epistemes. So, that preparedness that people talk about, that’s another way of talking about what you’re saying ...

I think another way, in terms of strategies, is “follow the money,” in terms of analyzing how these projects are governed. So, if you look at those projects, if the percentage of the money is so small towards Indigenous students, faculty, communities that the money is not actually getting put into Indigenous governance but it’s getting put everywhere else, that’s probably a good indicator of how to measure, how to guess what these projects are really about. I feel like if you “follow the money” it could probably be pretty obvious what the projects are really about.

Ann also mentioned that all the measures of accountability in a project must be communicated to the readers when the research is published so that they can see clearly what the process of collaboration entailed and how the money for the project was spent. In sum, for Ann, congruency means transparency:

I just thought of another point. I was reviewing a paper the other day, and these researchers have been working with Mi’kmaw communities out east, and they just had one sentence, where they said, “We’ve been working with these communities in a way that made us open to their feedback” because they spent a lot of time talking about where they made a mistake. I appreciated that, but nothing else about the actual accountability measure, the practices, processes through which that happened: Were you giving presentations? Were you in meetings? What is your accountability? Do you have a protocol? Do you have an ethics

guideline with the community? Do you have monthly meetings with Elders? Do you have an advisory committee?

That's the thing, we know the academic version: there's peer review, there's getting your PhD and all these methods to verify knowledge, whether it's empirical positivist, there are all these ways to verify what's considered knowledge of value and of truth. Those exist over here, too, but they're not as well known to outside people.

So how can we ... let scientists name those things, what were those things that you did that created that way for you to get feedback? What was the accountability structure? So, how do researchers support that? And that's what I mean by that "Indigenous governance structure." How can research and researchers and research money support that stuff? Do the researchers talk about where the money went, what the process was? Did some money go towards a community researcher?

Ann's words echo Wilson's when he explained that some researchers are good at writing grant applications and others are good at making sure that research ideas get translated into work that is relevant and benefits Indigenous communities.

Likewise, for Beatrice, valuable Indigenous research should also be measured by its level of accountability to Indigenous communities. She said the measure of good research lies in "action," in how much change it can trigger:

What is the link between research and action?

What is going to happen with this research?

Is there some kind of plan to take action on the research because Inuit have been researched to death with little or nothing positive to come from it?

Academics publish an article in some obscure journal, and then nothing happens. ... And that's something you can't get academic funding for either, the action stage of the research. It's more than dissemination, more than just sending an email to a policy developer saying, "I have attached the results of this research."

It's being able to get the research and recommendations in people's faces for as long as it takes, going to the media, working with the community to get something done about the results. And that's more often than not what's missing from research.

Lastly, the impact of research can also be seen in its ability to reach people who are not academics:

Ultimately, Canadians have to care about the results enough to demand that something more be done about issues, such as overcrowded housing, food insecurity, access to health, education and employment, recovery from trauma and racism, and implementing further self-determination.

Conclusion

Both Ann and Beatrice demonstrated through their descriptions, conceptualization, and practice of Indigenous research a high level of congruency between who they are, what they say, and what they do. Looking at these conversations in light of what Indigenous researchers said led me to conclude that Indigenist research can be done well, following the principles of relationality and reciprocity, by non-Indigenous researchers.

Nonetheless, it is harder to do this as a non-Indigenous researcher because the Settler position and western training can be obstacles if not thoroughly unpacked. Furthermore, non-Indigenous researchers who want to do this kind of research must put in extra time and extra effort to build relationships with Indigenous people and with Indigenous knowledge, in addition to unpacking internalized colonialism. The fruitfulness of this process will also depend on

researchers' personalities, their personal histories, and their abilities to look at themselves honestly and listen and learn from Indigenous peoples.

What is also evident from these conversations is that Indigenous leaders and community members are no longer interested in working with “expert” researchers; they want listening and cooperating allies who will share decision-making power. The success of Ann and Beatrice can be traced to their attitude of humility, to their wiliness to learn, to their sense of accountability and reciprocity, which are what earned them the trust of Indigenous partners.

As do Indigenous researchers, Ann and Beatrice also struggle to do relational research within academic institutions that do not recognize the value of relationship building. Indeed, prioritizing relationships has led them to publish less, which, within the economy of academic knowledge production, has disadvantaged them.

Nonetheless, at the end of the day, the time and energy they invested into these relationships has multiplied many times and has given them a strong anchor and credibility within specific Indigenous communities. As Lee stated, for non-Indigenous researchers, these relationships are their positionality. They have made their way into the hearts of Indigenous people and gained their trust by putting their skills to work *for* Indigenous peoples. Both these researchers embody an allyship that goes beyond words and that is truly based on living according to the principles of Indigenous research.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to chart the multidisciplinary field of Indigenous research in Canada and examine its evolution in the last two decades. In view of the substantial volume of studies in this field, I am aware that there are likely numerous valuable studies that I have not examined, which may have added more evidence and nuance to my thesis. Nonetheless, the 46 studies I selected across various disciplines are representative of the various forms that Indigenous research has taken and continues to take in Canada. These studies were investigated using a scoping methodology that consisted of thematically analyzing the data and presenting interpretations of the findings. The scoping methodology was conducted in line with my research questions, and key components of the studies – the methodologies, epistemologies, and researcher positionalities – were examined, along with such relevant factors as the scientific disciplines of the studies, the local contexts in which they were undertaken, and the time frames. The intersection of all these variables resulted in a complex, multidimensional representation of Indigenous research that has more depth and volume than was first anticipated (Figure 15 represents two figures superimposed to show the multidimensionality).

Figure 15

Multidimensional Indigenous Research



Returning to the Main Findings of the Scoping Review

In terms of the epistemologies employed, the scoping review revealed that most of the health-related studies privileged a holistic and decolonizing approach and, therefore, prioritized using Indigenous teachings to conceptualize health and illness over pathological considerations: “Where the Aboriginal health model is holistic and encompasses the four dimensions of health (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being), the western biomedical concept of health often concentrates on disease and infirmity” (Howell et al., 2016, p. 114). Most of the frameworks used, like the Medicine Wheel, the Anishinaabe Seven Generations Teaching (Lavallee, 2009; Lavallee & Poole, 2010), and the Cree Health Teaching Circle (Pazderka et al., 2014) can be considered anti-colonial, as they affirm Indigenous people’s rights to self-determination and include the larger social and political context of colonization and intergenerational trauma (McGinnis et al., 2019). Indigenism in health research therefore reflects a form of epistemic resistance that “directly confronts and challenges colonial oppression and upholds Indigenous self-determination” (Rowe et al., 2020, p. 160).

The scoping review revealed that the epistemologies used in educational research also espouse a holistic and relational Indigenous worldview. Storywork and storytelling were used as theoretical and analytical frameworks (Alteo, 2009; Deer, 2016; Stelmach et al., 2017). The Medicine Wheel was used to connect education and wellness in a “wheel-as-model approach” promoting a holistic and integrated approach to education (Robinson et al., 2016, p. 111). Land-based educational research using Anishinaabe epistemologies also underlined how research must prioritize traditional ecological knowledge to support educational self-determination (Twance, 2019). Lastly, Indigenous research in education also used “a unifying Indigenous philosophy” to

amplify the voice of Indigenous students and their experiences in the education system (Stelmach et al., 2017, p. 5).

The methodologies that issued from these epistemologies reflect the importance of relationality and therefore encourage relational accountability with Indigenous partners. The most-used methodology was community-based participatory research incorporating Elders in the research process as advisors on ethics committees, as co-researchers, and as ceremonial experts providing guidance for cultural protocols. The most-used method for gathering data was talking or sharing or healing circles. Additionally, this circle methodology was often combined with storytelling, creating one seamless movement in which stories were shared within a circle (Wilson, 2008).

Regarding researcher positionality, in 40 out of the 46 studies reviewed, authors explicitly located themselves, engaging in a self-reflexive examination of their positionality and discussing how their location influenced them as knowledge producers. Additionally, most researchers reflected on the principle of relationality in the process of doing Indigenous research. Most researchers also acknowledged that this self-reflexive exercise was crucial to their successful work with Indigenous people. However, there was no consensus among researchers regarding what best qualified them to do Indigenous research. In some cases, it was the accumulated knowledge and professional experiences in Indigenous contexts that was seen as enabling researchers to conduct Indigenous research (Healy, 2014; Robinson et al., 2016; Thorpe, 1997, 1998). In other cases, it was the Indigenous sensibility of Indigenous researchers that was said to best position them to do Indigenous research (Stelmach et al., 2017; Twance, 2019).

Looking at each of these components separately and then at how they work together, the scoping review concluded that the most important aspect of a study is how the epistemic

framework, the methodology (including methods), and the researcher's position are aligned. What is evident from the scoping review is that the epistemological and methodological choices flowed directly from the positionality of researchers within Indigenous contexts, as this positionality determined their understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems. The scoping review also confirmed that the ability to do Indigenous research following Indigenous principles is not dependent on Indigenous identity but rather is related to relationships and to relational accountability. The findings further indicate that positionality is not static but a dynamic and evolving component of each researcher's identity. It deeply influences how and why they conduct research.

Relationality with Indigenous partners and community members determines how the research is conducted and the level of accountability it maintains. There is a positive correlation between researcher positionality and relationality: the more a researcher is centred in an insider position, with close ties to Indigenous community members and with lived experiences in such a milieu, the more their knowledge is situated within that knowledge system. This situatedness makes the researcher accountable to that knowledge system and to that community. The scoping review did not conclude that an insider position, centred in Indigenous knowledge systems, must necessarily be Indigenous, although it is likely to be, or that an outsider position is always a non-Indigenous person. Identity and positionality are far more fluid and complex than clear-cut lines that separate Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and that is because human relationships cross over ethnic and cultural lines.

To illustrate this, I proposed a conceptualization of positionality along a spectrum from the most insider position (Indigenous perspective) to the most outsider position (western perspective), with a middle ground of a mixed position (western/Indigenous perspective). The strength of this

spectrum approach to positionality is that it does not follow set lines of Indigenous and Settler categories. It therefore leaves room to make sense of grey areas. For example, in some studies, Indigenous researchers indicated that they felt like outsiders in certain communities, not only because they were not from that particular community but because of their university training and their role as researcher. In contrast, a few non-Indigenous researchers were adopted into Indigenous communities (both unofficial adoption and real adoption) and embodied Indigenous epistemologies as lived philosophies. Many other researchers chose to retain and honour both an Indigenous and a non-Indigenous worldview, as this reflected their training, upbringing, and even ancestry. Thus, the blended approach was also purposefully adopted to mirror a mixed positionality. Consequently, it is not the blood quantum or any other colonial marker of Indigenous identity that determines the quality of an individual's research but rather how well situated they are within Indigenous knowledge systems and communities.

The scoping review also revealed that, since the publication of the TRC report (2015), there has been a gradual but undeniable increase in the number of Indigenous–non-Indigenous collaborations prioritizing a mixed-methods, western–Indigenous research approach. This indicates that the face of Indigenous research has changed dramatically in the last few years. From initially being a mode of inquiry used mainly by Indigenous researchers as an act of resistance against mainstream western forms of knowledge production and as a validation of Indigenous epistemologies, it has become a quasi-mainstream research approach commonly used by non-Indigenous researchers. This was perhaps predictable, as there are very few Indigenous researchers in academia. Ironically, therefore, Indigenous research as a methodological option seems to have expanded faster than the rate at which Indigenous faculty have entered academia. Drawing on this small sample of Indigenous research, the scoping review nonetheless revealed that although

Indigenous researchers are still determining the methodological and philosophical foundations of Indigenous research, the praxis of Indigenous research has expanded to include mostly non-Indigenous researchers in collaboration with Indigenous partners. This exponential expansion of Indigenous research in relation to the slower entry of Indigenous researchers in academia can be interpreted from two perspectives, the metaphorical “glass half full” or “glass half empty”.

From the glass half full perspective, the increase in collaborative research signals a new era in which Indigenist research, in a cross-cultural effort to decolonize the academy, is disrupting Eurocentric ways of producing knowledge and is celebrating Indigenous knowledge systems within educational institutions. This “Indigenous trend” has gained momentum because of the recognition of its validity coming from multiple disciplines and allied theories. Indigenist research has soared through the efforts of non-Indigenous researchers and institutions to become allies in the struggle of Indigenous peoples by fostering reconciliation through collaborative research.

At the opposite end, the glass half empty viewpoint sees this increase in cross-cultural collaborative research not as an enriching but as a dilution of the essence of Indigenous research as it becomes more mainstream. The popularity of Indigenous research would indicate that it has effectively been recycled and reprocessed by non-Indigenous institutions and researchers for their own purposes, following their own agendas. This would signal not a decolonization effort but rather a new form of cultural appropriation that specifically affects Indigenous faculty and Indigenous knowledge systems. In the current political context, this would be possible because there is ample funding for such ventures and prestige to be gained by non-Indigenous researchers and institutions doing Indigenous research. These opposing assessments having been presented, at the end of my scoping review, I concluded that the glass was half full and that the thrust for reconciliation was taking place in Canada due to Indigenous research.

Finally, the scoping review also addressed the question of what constitutes good Indigenous research. This ties back to one of the initial goals of the thesis, which was to find a conceptual tool or strategy to assess or sift through Indigenous research projects regardless of the context or the discipline. In the scoping review, I presented Carter and Little's (2007) argument that good qualitative research is marked by the consistency between epistemology, methodology, and methods. In the case of Indigenous research, however, we must go further. I argued that valuable Indigenous research requires an internal coherence between a researcher's positionality, the epistemic framework, and the methodology. This coherence, I argued, is necessary because Indigenous knowledge systems are not simply academic theoretical constructions but are embodied knowledge systems, learned and enacted through relationships. Indigenous epistemologies are therefore intimately connected to a researcher's positionality and relationships within a community. Lastly, I stipulated that this connection between epistemology, positionality, and methodology must be made explicit. Indigenous research must be recognized and respected by virtue of its internal coherence.

In conclusion, the first five steps of the scoping review, which followed Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) methodology, were necessary to understand the nature and scope of Indigenous research. This review can be seen as a first step in the right direction and is by no means sufficient to grasp all the complexities and factors when considering the evolution of Indigenous research in Canada. The image that comes to mind is that of a telescope: it is a helpful tool when trying to spot an iceberg on the horizon and steer clear of it, but, in itself, it is not sufficient to avoid a collision because it does not enable the hidden underwater volume of the iceberg to be assessed. To perceive the whole iceberg, one needs to use a more sophisticated instrument capable of seeing under water, like radar. In hindsight, this metaphor illustrates my experience of the research process: the scoping

review (first five steps) was like a telescope: it revealed what lay on the surface of Indigenous research. The last step of the review, the consultation of scholars using an Indigenous conversational approach, acted like radar and revealed what lay beneath the surface, which, as in the case of the iceberg, was much larger than what lay above.

Conversations with Scholars

The second half of the thesis signalled a change of gears. Using a different methodology, I set out to speak directly to Indigenous researchers. I wanted to, first, present them with the results of the scoping review and seek their insights. Second, I wanted to ask what their experience of the expansion of Indigenous research was. After the first series of conversations with eight Indigenous scholars, I also spoke with two non-Indigenous researchers. Considering what has been said about the increase of collaborative research, it was important to include their perspective and experience. Therefore, while most of the information gathered concerning Indigenous research and its evolution came from Indigenous researchers, the point of view of non-Indigenous researchers echoed their voices, showing the reader that there is an alignment of perspectives regarding the main principles of Indigenous research and the value of congruency.

The methodology used for this second phase was the Indigenous conversational method framed by Kovach (2010). It was a delicate methodology to use because I am not Indigenous and because a virtual context for conversations could be seen as not very conducive to confidences. I knew that for this dialogue to be successful, I had to commit myself to practicing relationality. This meant practicing the principles I had been reading about, including truthfulness, trust, respect, and reciprocity. Only from a space of openness and sharing would an honest exchange be possible. My hope was that during these conversations, we would co-create new insights concerning the use of Indigenous knowledge systems, methodologies, and researcher positionality.

I started by introducing myself and spoke about my relationship and story with the Wixárika people of Mexico. This personal sharing of position, history, location, and motivation proved to be crucial. I am certain it created a sense of mutual trust and respect, and researchers felt comfortable sharing with me their own journeys, experiences, and perspectives in return. At the end of the process, after many hours of dialogue, my understanding was deeply impacted. All these researchers showed me my blind spots; I saw that the iceberg was clearly much larger and went much deeper than I had initially surmised.

Is the Glass Half Empty after All?

The first thing that I learned during these dialogues was that there is a “shadow side” to Indigenous research. Alongside the discourse of Indigenization and reconciliation heard on many campuses, there are also forms of deceit and opportunism occurring in plain sight. I learned that cultural appropriation is commonplace and occurs at different levels. There are non-Indigenous researchers ambiguously presenting as Indigenous and others unambiguously pretending to be Indigenous by various stratagems. There is also research that goes so far as to “clothe” its results with a metaphorical headdress so as to make it look Indigenous:

You pretend it is Indigenous by putting a feather on it, and you put a Medicine Wheel in your results, so you arrange your results in a little Medicine Wheel. But you’ve done everything else the same way; you just put on these clothes of Indigenous research without actually changing anything in the heart of it. (Wilson)

Tokenism is also alive and well. I learned that Indigenous faculty are often invited to projects, but they are invited too late into a project so that their voices are really present and do not alter it significantly. Sometimes, they are not even consulted although their names are added to research applications, this is done with the goal to strengthen the applications and secure

funding. These tactics are ways to access the new resources that have been allocated precisely for reconciliation and to implement, in the wake of the TRC, the “Calls to Action” (2015). The dialogues with Indigenous scholars familiarized me with the slippery politics of Indigenous identity in Canada and with the concept of “race-shifting”.

Several scholars pointed to the work of Leroux (*Distorted Descent: White Claims to Indigenous identity*, 2019) to better understand what “identity theft”, “ethnic fraud”, and cultural appropriation are and how they happening in certain academic milieux as part of a larger movement occurring across North America by which “race-shifting consolidates contemporary forms of colonialism that oppose actual Indigenous people in the present” (Leroux, 2019, p. 214). Hence, I discovered that “self-indigenization” is present and assumes various forms in Indigenous research. These tactics are hard to identify because they are articulated in the “language of decolonization” and solidarity with Indigenous peoples (Leroux, 2019, p.215). The kind of stratagems used by some non-Indigenous researchers can be better understood following Leroux’s analysis of race-shifting in Canada: “This is above all a 21st century effort to transform the boundaries of whiteness and white identities in a context where Indigenous political claims risk undermining the established (white) order of things” (Leroux, 2019, p. 219). The occurrence of tokenism and race-shifting tactics in academic milieux was also corroborated by the non-Indigenous scholars, signalling a not-very-covert stratagem.

In hindsight, the undercurrent of cultural appropriation and identity theft happening in Indigenous research was completely missing from the scoping review. Indeed, during the study selection process, (46 studies out of 139), I purposefully excluded all the studies that were “unconvincing.” Hence, I did not include in the scoping review the studies that used pan-Indigenous theoretical frameworks disconnected from their proposed methods, nor did I include

those that used methodologies disjointed from local contexts. I excluded these studies because of their faulty, misaligned methodology and therefore did not consider them to be Indigenous research but rather “poor” research on Indigenous peoples. However, the existence of these studies puzzled me, so I created some question to ask researchers about the adoption of pan-Indigenism and the cultural appropriation of Indigenous knowledge systems. These questions based on the “excluded” studies led to a series of revelations on this phenomenon of “race-shifting”.

The scoping review results and the analysis of the discussions with scholars coincided in pointing to the fact that the missing link in Indigenous research is positionality: when positionality is explicitly presented, and when it is considered in conjunction with all the other components of research, then Indigenous research comes full circle. So-called “Indigenous” theoretical frameworks and methodologies become obviously disconnected when we scrutinize their relationship to the positionality of the authors.

Yet the Glass is Also Half Full ...

Indigenous researchers reassured me that, while there are “counterfeit” forms of Indigenous research in circulation and colonial mindsets still in place, Indigenous research has nonetheless come into maturity in the last 10 years. Undeniably, Indigenous research has become more systematized and is now “*a substantive theory in its own right*” (Wilson). Furthermore, according to the scholars I spoke to, it is not just for Indigenous peoples. Indigenist research is now a multicultural and cross-sectional methodological and philosophical space where Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies thrive. In this new space, many non-Indigenous researchers are working in collaboration with Indigenous faculty for the benefit of Indigenous communities. As allies, these researchers base their positionalities on their relationships with Indigenous peoples, engage in relational accountability, and work toward reconciliation.

Furthermore, Indigenist research has substantially grown through the constant influx of Indigenous students coming into academia. New generations of Indigenous researchers are developing in less hostile environments thanks to the work of Indigenous mentors. More and more young researchers are daring to do research from their own locations and epistemologies, creating new methodologies relevant to their communities. Place-based Indigenous research, the opposite of pan-Indigenism, is therefore thriving and expanding. The path has broadened over the years, and the current generation of Indigenous scholars is standing strong on the shoulders of their predecessors.

Paradoxes

If the “glass” of Indigenous research is simultaneously half full *and* half empty, then there are some paradoxes that need unpacking. Indigenous researchers have struggled over the last 10 years to gain visibility and to give validity to Indigenous epistemologies in academic milieux. However, the publication of traditional Indigenous knowledge in research is also problematic because it can lead to the overexposure and denaturalization of oral knowledge (Absolon, 2011). And it is precisely this academic visibility that has enabled different forms of appropriation, misrepresentation, and distortion of Indigenous knowledge. Many Indigenous researchers have therefore chosen to prioritize preservation or “not over disclosing knowledge that is collectively held by a community” over publication (Windchief, 2020, p. 60). This preservation strategy runs counter to the academic impetus to produce knowledge: it *contains* rather than *exposes*, it *sustains* rather than *depletes*, and it is practiced so that Indigenous knowledge is not completely “*whitewashed*” (Wilson Danard) in the “capitalist system” of knowledge production because, “in academia, there seems to be an incentive to produce scholarship that mirrors the extraction of

resources” (Windchief, 2020, p. 61). Indigenous researchers have therefore found various means to publish while, simultaneously, protecting Indigenous knowledge.

Nonetheless, the conclusion of this research is that the most important strategy to protect Indigenous knowledge is congruency: maintaining an inner coherence between who scholars are – not just as researchers but as people – what they believe, by what principles they live, and how they conduct research.

Congruency

Deepening the concept of congruency and its implications for Indigenous research is one of the major outcomes of this research. Congruency is the quality of aligning actions, words, and thoughts. In Indigenous research, congruency is present when all the different parts of the research “agree”: when they talk to each other in the same language. Moreover, congruency gives integrity and value to the research conducted. All the researchers who participated, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, spent a lot of time talking about the importance of congruency and how it manifests through relationships. In this regard, beyond the socializing aspect of research, relationality as a principle guiding Indigenous research turned out to be a deep philosophical concept.

When it is said that Indigenous knowledge systems are “relational”, this does not only mean that knowledge is shared through relationships; rather, it means that the very nature of reality is about “relational” and based on interconnectivity:

Everything that we are, everything that the universe is made of, is those relationships between things rather than the things themselves; things themselves are important, but those things themselves are made up of a gazillion other relationships themselves.

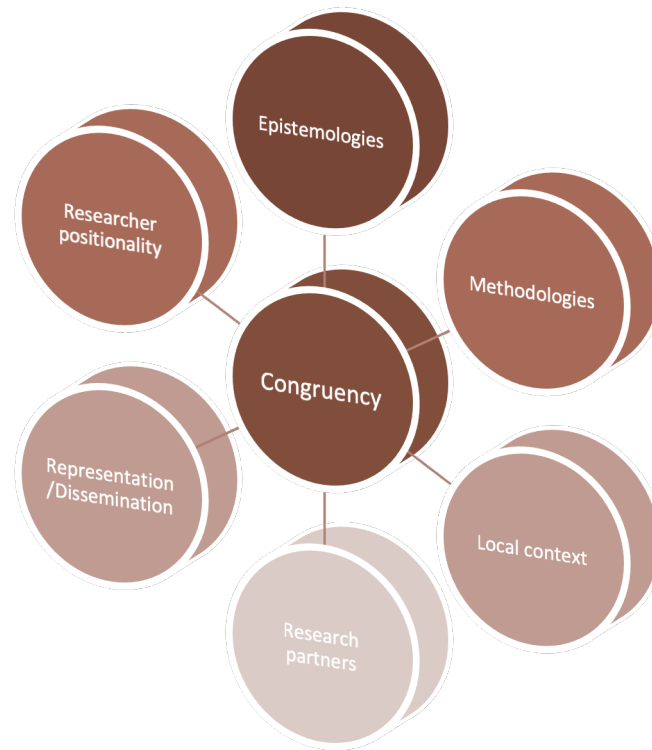
So that’s what Indigenous ontology is, that *everything is related*. (Wilson in Coburn, 2021)

Indigenous knowing prioritizes seeing the whole over fragmentation; it is about making the network of connections and the interdependence of things explicit. This knowledge of the relational nature of the universe is constantly re-created and co-created through relationships. This is a deeply personal, emotional, experiential, and spiritual way of conceptualizing knowledge, which deeply affects how knowledge production is seen. Indigenous knowing therefore stipulates that individuals do not exist outside of the whole to which they belong: “I am all my relations.” Nothing is simply an “object,” everything participates consciously in this network, and “everything is alive.” To conceptualize an existence outside of the relational nature of the world would be incomplete and partial; it would be equal to thinking about a finger without thinking about the hand to which it belongs.

For everything to be connected and function seamlessly as one, congruency must be present. Therefore, if congruency is at the centre of this relational vision of knowledge, then it must be present at all levels of Indigenous research. Indeed, relational and congruent Indigenous research cannot just pay lip service to Indigenous epistemic principles but must actualize them through relationships. Collaborators cannot have the title of “co-researchers” if they do not take part in the decision-making process. Methodologies must be connected to teachings, to people, to places, and to researchers. And there must also be a deep and personal relationship between the researcher and Indigenous knowledge. Lastly, there must be congruency between Indigenous knowledge and how it is presented in research. Indigenous research cannot discuss *embodied* knowing principles in a *disembodied* way. Like a three-dimensional image, as figure 16, it must have depth and volume to give form to the *lived* and *living* knowledge on which it is based.

Figure 16

Multidimensional Indigenous Research with Congruency at the Centre



The Research Journey

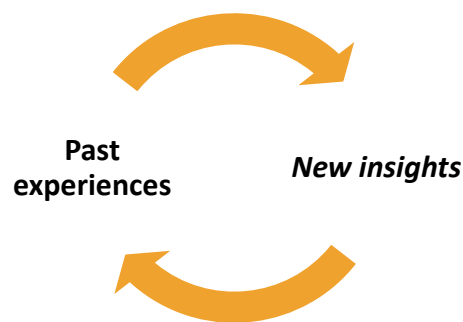
The first phase of the scoping review, as a text-based analysis, presented what I was able to perceive through my lens alone. Based on this, I argued that it is crucial to connect epistemological frameworks to researcher positionality to assess the trustworthiness of the research conducted. However, certain elements were missing from my initial appraisal. In the second phase of the research, the conversations with scholars took this analysis further and allowed me to perceive Indigenous research from an insider perspective. Opening up to see from this perspective was crucial to gain new insights and see the multiple layers of Indigenous research.

The whole research process (from phase one to phase two) can, therefore, be described as going from a more abstract way of conceptualizing Indigenous research to a more relational way of understanding it. Paradoxically, the precondition for these new insights was my own prior experience of learning through relationships within the Wixárika context. In hindsight, I can say

that it was my foundation in Indigenous knowledge prior to doing this research that allowed me to understand what these researchers were talking about, especially in terms of Indigenous epistemologies. Therefore, this confirmed, once again, the cyclical nature of Indigenous learning and Indigenous knowledge, represented in figure 17: current relationships lead to new understandings, but these relationships are possible because of prior knowing and past relationships, and the new relationships, in turn, shed new light on the importance of past experiences.

Figure 17

Cyclical Nature of Indigenous Knowledge



What Lies Ahead

In conclusion, Indigenous research is moving away from pan-Indigenous frameworks and stepping into an era of more specific land-based Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies. Current and future generations of Indigenous researchers are grounding and will ground their research in their own locations and epistemic stances. This signals that past efforts have born fruit; Indigenous faculty are more empowered today, in academic milieux, than they were 10 years ago. This empowerment results from the struggle of past generations who worked hard so that educational institutions would recognize these “alternative” research approaches as equally valid to any western approach.

However, the future of Indigenous research also lies in non-Indigenous researchers. It lies in collaborations and in the level of preparedness that non-Indigenous researchers are willing to attain to create and maintain good relationships with Indigenous partners. Indeed, all researchers must also go through the process of unpacking embedded colonialism before they engage in Indigenous research to avoid appropriation and distortion of Indigenous knowledge: *“unless people who are non-Indigenous are unpacking that, feminists, or community-based-researchers or whoever these Allies say they are, unless they’re unpacking that, they’re perpetuating it”* (Absolon). Congruency, as a central quality of Indigenous research, must be found in the research conducted by all Indigenist researchers. All Indigenist research must display epistemological awareness and positional awareness if it is to align itself with the epistemic principles of Indigenous research.

Moving forward, the real challenge to achieve this level of congruency lies in the fact that Indigenous research methodologies are not taught conjunctively with Indigenous epistemologies in graduate seminars (either master’s or doctoral). Indeed, if Indigenous methodological approaches are presented in a fragmentary way and are cut from their epistemic roots, then they may seem to be easy to implement without prior knowledge and without prior relationships to Indigenous people. This is a danger because nothing could be further from the truth. This research, especially the conversational portion, has shown that prior knowledge and prior relationships are necessary to do Indigenous research in a non-colonial way. But this is also a conundrum. If Indigenous methodologies are to be made available to all researchers, how do we teach them in a way that does them justice and shows the depth of knowledge and experience that is required to pursue them?

This is important because the graduate students of today are the researchers of tomorrow. How Indigenist approaches and paradigms are taught in universities today will influence how Indigenist research is conducted tomorrow. This will in turn impact the forms that future collaborations take and how power and knowledge are shared with Indigenous partners. If we want future of Indigenous research to be congruent, if we want knowledge appropriation to cease, then we need to teach these methodological approaches in a way that makes evident that they are integral to larger Indigenous knowledge systems that belong to Indigenous peoples.

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APPENDIX A

Invitation to participate in a Consultation exercise

University of Ottawa,
Faculty of Education,
145 Jean Jacques Lussier, Ottawa ON
K1N 0N5, Canada.
www.uOttawa.ca

Project title:

*Indigenous epistemologies, methodologies and researcher positionality in Indigenous research:
A scoping review of Canadian scholarship from 1997 to 2020.*

Researcher:

Jimena Marquez,
Ph.D. Candidate,
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa.

Supervisor:

Dr. Richard Maclure,
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa.

Date: 15/05/2021

Esteemed professor,

My name is Jimena Marquez, I am Ph.D. Candidate at the faculty of Education at Ottawa University, on the unceded territories of the Anishinaabe Nation.

Description of the research:

Research in Indigenous contexts has been historically associated with colonialism. To counter this, Indigenous research recenters knowledge production on Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous voices. As a settler ally living in Canada, I have chosen to my doctoral research as a scoping review on Canadian Indigenous research (1996-2020). Adopting Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) scoping methodology, I have focused on research projects, across disciplines, that use an Indigenous research paradigm and privileged an Indigenous research agenda: "to decolonize, to transform, to mobilize and to heal through the practice of research" (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 144). I have searched four databases and selected 46 papers to be included for the final analysis. The overall aim of this scoping review is to map out the praxis of Indigenous research by 1) examining the epistemological currents found in Canadian Indigenous research, 2) analyzing the diverse Indigenous methods used, and 3) weighting the crucial role that researcher positionality plays in Indigenous research.

The final step in the scoping review process is an expert consultation in the chosen field (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). In this case, consulting with Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers that have an experience with an Indigenous methodology will add a higher level of meaning and bring an experienced-based perspective to the analysis that textual analysis alone cannot.

As a scholar who has conducted research according to an Indigenous research paradigm and who has written on the subject, I am contacting you to invite you to participate in this consultation exercise.

Modality of consultation:

The proposed consultation will be in the form of a conversational interview.

The conversation will be semi-structured and will center on the preliminary findings of the scoping review and will also include some more specific questions on your experience of Indigenous research.

In order to facilitate this conversation, if you agree to participate, a summary of the preliminary results of the scoping review will be provided prior to the conversation.

Participation:

Your participation, if you agree to participate, would be in the form of an online conversation(s) (on zoom or teams or via any other convenient platform) of approximately 30 to 60 minutes and possibly but not necessarily one follow-up conversation (for clarifications).

The conversation(s) would be audio recorded to facilitate transcription.

Anonymity:

You are invited to identify yourself as a scholar and expert in the field of Indigenous research.

If nonetheless, you prefer to remain anonymous and use a pseudonym, you will be able to choose one. I will not use your name unless permission has been explicitly given.

Confidentiality:

All data will be kept in a secure manner. After transcription, electronic copies of the transcripts and/or audio recordings will be password protected and only I will have access to them. Any hardcopy notes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home office. I will retain copies of my notes and transcriptions for a minimum of five years.

Voluntary participation:

Since the conversational interviews will take place online via media platforms (such as zoom), I will request that these be recorded, you can decline this. You are under no obligation to participate and can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any question, without suffering any negative consequences.

Possible Risks:

The potential harms and risks of participating in the interview are none.

Possible benefits:

Your participation in this study as an expert consultant in Indigenous research will enrich my analysis and provide a more in-depth perspective on the Indigenous research conducted in Canada. Your participation will contribute to a greater understanding of Indigenous research in the last two decades, and of the crucial role that researcher positionality plays in Indigenous research.

Thank you for considering my invitation.

Most sincerely, Jimena Marquez.

APPENDIX B



Université d'Ottawa
Faculté d'éducation

University of Ottawa
Faculty of Education

**Participant Consent Form for:
Expert consultation for Indigenous research scoping review.**

Project Title:

Indigenous methodologies, epistemologies, and researcher positionality in Indigenous research: A scoping review of Canadian scholarship from 1997 to 2020.

Researcher:

Jimena Marquez,
Ph.D. Candidate,
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa.

Supervisor:

Dr. Richard Maclure,
Faculty of Education, University of Ottawa.

Date: 30/04/2021

Purpose or research:

Research in Indigenous contexts has been historically associated with colonialism. To counter this, Indigenous research recenters knowledge production on Indigenous worldviews and Indigenous voices. As a settler ally living in Canada, I have chosen to my doctoral research as a scoping review on Canadian Indigenous research (1996-2020). Adopting Arksey and O'Malley's (2005) scoping methodology, I have focused on research projects, across disciplines, that use an Indigenous research paradigm and privileged an Indigenous research agenda: "to decolonize, to transform, to mobilize and to heal through the practice of research" (L. T. Smith, 1999, p. 144). I have searched four databases and selected 46 papers to be included for the final analysis. The overall aim of this scoping review is to map out the praxis of Indigenous research by 1) examining the epistemological currents found in Canadian Indigenous research, 2) analyzing the diverse Indigenous methods used, and 3) weighting the crucial role that researcher positionality plays in Indigenous research.

The final step in the scoping review process is an expert consultation in the chosen field (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005). In this case, consulting with Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers that have an experience with an Indigenous methodology will add a higher level of meaning and bring an experienced-based perspective to the analysis that textual analysis alone cannot.

As a scholar who has conducted research according to an Indigenous research paradigm and who has written on the subject, I am contacting you to invite you to participate in this consultation exercise.

Tel/Tél : 613-562-5804
Fax/Téléc : 613-562-5144
145, Jean-Jacques Lussier

Participation:

I am invited to participate in a conversational interview that will be recorded and that will last from 30 minutes to 60 minutes approximately.

I am also invited to participate in a possible second follow up conversation, which will also be recorded and will last approximately 30 minutes. I will have the opportunity to review the transcript(s) of my interview(s) (based on the recordings) to ensure that the conversational interview write-ups accurately represent my research experiences and ideas concerning the topic of research. I will be able to modify the transcripts and add or omit anything I would like to from these. The researcher will send me a copy of my transcript(s) within 30 days of the conversational interview(s) via email. If there is a follow-up conversational interview, it will follow the same process. If there are still further changes, I would like to make to my transcripts, I will have another chance to review them, if I wish before the transcripts are finalized. In both cases, I will have 15 days to respond with my changes.

Possible Risks:

The potential harms and risks of participating in these conversations are none.

Possible benefits:

My participation in this study, as a consultant/expert in Indigenous research, will contribute to a greater understanding of Indigenous research, and of the crucial role that positionality plays in Indigenous research.

My participation will also bring greater appreciation for the way Indigenous research is conducted in Canada today and how it has evolved over the last two decades.

Confidentiality:

I have received assurance from the researcher that the information I will share will be used for academic purposes only, this includes the researcher's Ph.D. thesis, publications in academic journals/books, presentations, and teaching. The data might be used for related or similar projects in the future, but the data will not be used for any unrelated purposes. By participating in an online interview, someone around me may overhear what I am saying. It is therefore important that I plan well for the interview in a place that provides me with a maximum of privacy.

Anonymity:

I understand that I am invited to identify myself as a scholar and expert in the field of Indigenous research. If nonetheless, I wish to remain anonymous and use a pseudonym of my choice, I will be able to do so. The researcher has explained to me that she will not use my name unless permission has been given, when she writes up or presents her research.

Protection of data:

I understand that all data will be kept in a secure manner for a period of five years. After transcription, audio recordings and electronic copies of the transcripts will be password protected and only the researcher will have access to them. Any hardcopy notes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's home office.

Voluntary participation:

Since the conversational interviews will take place online via media platforms (such as zoom), the researcher will request that these be recorded. I am under no obligation to participate and if I choose to participate, I can withdraw from the study at any time and/or refuse to answer any questions, without suffering any negative consequences. If I choose to withdraw, all data gathered until the time of withdrawal will be destroyed. To withdraw from the study, I simply contact the researcher using the contact information listed below.

Acceptance:

I, _____ (your name) agree to participate in the above research study conducted by Jimena Marquez of the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa; whose research is under the supervision of Dr. Maclure.

I give consent for our conversations to be audio recorded.

I give my consent to my name being published in the results.

I give my consent to my name being identified in relation to certain identified parts of my participation and not for others where I prefer to remain anonymous.

If I have any questions about the study, I may contact the researcher or her supervisor.

If I have any questions regarding the ethical conduct of this study, I may contact the Protocol Officer for Ethics in Research at University of Ottawa, Tabaret Hall, 550 Cumberland Street, Room 154, Ottawa, ON K1N 6N5. Tel.: (613) 562-5387. ethics@uottawa.ca

There are two copies of the consent form, one of which is mine to keep.

Participant's signature: (Signature) _____ Date: _____
Jimena Marquez _____ 10/5/2021 _____
Researcher's signature: (Signature) _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

Preliminary Conversations Guide with Indigenous researchers

First of all, thank you for accepting to participate in this consultation.

In order to open up this conversation on Indigenous research, I would first like to introduce myself and explain my interest in Indigenous research.

Positionality:

I situate myself as an *ally* to Indigenous peoples. This position results from my family background and from my youthful experiences among the Huichol people of the Mexican Sierra Madre, and of my subsequent collaboration with them during my master's research.

I grew up in Mexico City as the daughter of immigrant parents: my father being the son of exiled Spanish political refugees and my mother a French expatriate. My family history has always made me feel like a guest on someone else's lands. This was the case while living in Mexico, and is also true while living on the unceded Indigenous territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation.

Among the impactful experience I had with Indigenous peoples, what most stands out was when, at age twelve, I got to see the Easter or *semana santa* huichol celebrations in the remote Huichol community of Tatei'kie (San Andres Cohamiata) in the Western Sierra Madre. That first visit was, for me, akin to an 'initiation' into the magical world of Huichol cosmology and ritual. That experience was so impressionable that, as a teenager and young adult, I returned each year, many times, to witness again and again the mesmerizing and intricate *Semana Santa* celebrations. These repeated trips to the Sierra over the years created long-lasting relationships with Huichol community members, and with non-Indigenous allies working side by side with the Huichol community in the Sierra. These experiences led me to study Huichol cosmology, and to do fieldwork in that same community with the *mará'akte* or Huichol shamans.

As a teacher in anthropology in Cégep (2007-2018), my work has sought to decolonize and indigenize post-secondary education through teaching about Indigenous cultures and inviting Indigenous community members to collaborate in pedagogical activities.

This present research on Indigenous methodology stems from my continued interest in Indigenous epistemologies and from the question: *what right do I have as a non-Indigenous person to do Indigenous research?* My doctoral research is aimed in part at answering this question for myself but maybe for other researchers like me that are wondering the same thing

Conversation guide:

Some of the questions will be specifically about your approach and experience of Indigenous research and some questions will be directly related to the scoping review findings – I think both will complement each other.

Introductory questions:

1. What led you on the 'path' of Indigenous research?

In the scoping review, I analyze the use of Indigenous epistemologies, methodologies and researcher positionality, I will also divide these questions along these same categories:

I- Concerning the use of Indigenous epistemologies in research:

Many Indigenous scholars have written of the nature of Indigenous epistemologies, about their underlying principles of interconnectedness and relationality (Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009), but also about the importance of recognizing their unique cultural specificity as place-based knowledge systems (Battiste, 2008).

In the process of the scoping review, what caught my attention is that many of the studies I reviewed had a theoretical framework that came across as being *generally* or *loosely* related to an Indigenous epistemology. Several theoretical frameworks simply stated that their research was “conceptualized within an Aboriginal worldview” and followed a “holistic relational approach” for example (Dell et al., 2011).

1. In your opinion, as an Indigenous scholar, do you think this kind of *general* Indigenous epistemological positioning/stance is a valid Indigenous theoretical framework?
2. Another thing that caught my attention is that among the research projects that I reviewed that did refer to a specific place-based Indigenous culture and its epistemological principles, a few were not written by Indigenous authors. How do you feel about non-Indigenous researchers using Indigenous epistemologies for their research in this specific way?
3. According to you, where can we draw the line between cultural *appropriateness* and *cultural sensitivity* when conducting research in a specific Indigenous community and cultural *appropriation* of Indigenous knowledge systems?
4. I wanted to give a specific example of Pan-Indigenous research and discuss with you the amalgamation of Inuit and First Nations epistemologies under the umbrella category of “*Indigenous worldview*”.

I will give you a specific example that I did not include in my scoping review because of their theoretical framework. This study mentioned the importance of “*Spirit*” as being “*at the center of Aboriginal ways of knowing in relation to the natural world*” (Dell, et al., 2011, p. 322). Additionally, it was mentioned by the authors that horses, in particular had important, within this worldview, a “spiritual gift” to offer people and occupied a central “*healing role*” (Dell, et al., 2011, p. 323). Subsequently, in this study, this so-called Indigenous framework was used to support the cultural appropriateness and validity of an equine-assisted treatment program for solvent abuse for First Nations and Inuit youth. This study also used this framework to assess the impacts of this treatment method on First Nations and Inuit youth. My issue with this approach is that based on what I have learned about Inuit epistemology, horses really do not figure in it their worldview or epistemology at all.

5. I would like to know what do you make of this kind of study (and cultural treatment) that amalgamates together First Nations and Inuit under the same umbrella of “aboriginal” and assumes that an equine assisted program would also be appropriate for all Indigenous people? Is this *sound* Indigenous research?
6. Moving to the issue of the use of Indigenous languages in research. Indigenous languages are inextricably linked to Indigenous epistemologies, how do you, in your own research deal with the issue of translating Indigenous epistemological principles into English for the purposes of research?

Follow-up:

7. How does one go about finding accurate translations for Indigenous cosmological concepts?

Concerning Indigenous methodologies:

8. Throughout my study of Indigenous methodologies, I have discovered that they can be very malleable and applied to many topics and contexts – for example, I really appreciated how Photovoice can be modified/Indigenized to create a new Indigenous method - the Anishinaabe Symbol-based research method, as created by Lynn Lavallee (2009). I think that best exemplifies reclaiming the research process and decolonizing it. Yet, I have been surprised to read that some Indigenous methods, like storytelling or *storywork*, are being used in non-Indigenous contexts *with* non-Indigenous participants. In my understanding the whole point of Indigenous methodologies is to use them to conduct respectful, relevant, and reciprocal research *in* Indigenous contexts.

What are your thoughts on this use of Indigenous methodologies?

Follow-up:

9. Do you think that Indigenous research methods can be used *outside* of Indigenous contexts? If so, under what conditions?

C. Researcher positionality:

10. Many Indigenous scholars, like Maggie Kovach, have stated that the question of *who* can conduct Indigenous research is not just a matter of being or not being Indigenous, but it is more closely related to how one is *situated* within Indigenous communities and how familiar one is with Indigenous knowledge systems (Kovack, 2017).

Would you agree with this? If yes/no, why?

Follow-up:

What are your thoughts on this?

11. D. Wilson Danard & J. Restoule (2010) discuss the use of tobacco in Indigenous research process and state: “There is the matter of where the researcher is from and considering what right or responsibility do they have to hold, offer, harvest, receive and give tobacco... Who can use tobacco? It is an issue that requires discussion, reflection and teachings.” (31)

Do you concur with these authors? What are your thoughts on this?

12. I wonder why these authors stated that most discussion and reflection is needed, are they pointed to the fact that some researchers just go through the *motions* and cultural protocols of Indigenous research and are not *experiencing* tobacco as being sacred? Do all researchers reflect on whether or not they actually have the right to *use* Indigenous methodologies like tobacco?
What are your thoughts on who can use tobacco? On who can do Indigenous research?
13. What do you think is needed for non-Indigenous researchers to be able to conduct Indigenous research *properly*?
14. Do you think that non-Indigenous researchers can be part of the effort to protect Indigenous knowledge systems from being wrongly manipulated or distorted?
15. After reading all the research projects (46), I discovered is that *collaborations* involving an integration of both insider and outsider perspectives and Indigenous and non-Indigenous positionalities were the most prominent form of Indigenous research. Indigenous research seems to be surprisingly not prominently conducted by Indigenous researchers but rather, emerges as a collective endeavor on the part of both Indigenous researchers and non-Indigenous. What are your thoughts on this?
16. Finally, through this scoping review I have sought assess whether there is a coherence or *internal agreement* between a researcher's *position*, his *epistemic stance*, and his proposed *methodology*. I think this is a critical exercise as it draws out the true value and integrity of the research conducted.
In your opinion, is looking for congruency within Indigenous research a valuable exercise?
Would you recommend another approach?

THANKS:

The researcher will thank the participant for being part of study.

FOLLOW-UP PROCEDURES:

The researcher will explain the follow-up procedure. The researcher will transcribe conversations within 30 days of the meetings and provide the participant with a transcribed copy in a format whereby they can apply direct comments and track changes (e.g., Microsoft Word). The participants will be asked to review the transcript within 15 days to ensure it reflects their comments and experiences (member checking), and to provide comments and track changes on the original transcript in Microsoft Word, or another format that is agreed upon by the interviewer and participant. This review process provides participants the opportunity to clarify and add points they think need clarification. It also gives them the opportunity to extract any information they do not want to be part of the research, or to add any information they wish to add. If there are amendments to be made to the interview after the participant completes the first review, the interviewer will make those amendments to the transcript, and provide the participant with a second transcript within 21 days to give the participant the opportunity to ensure the transcript

reflects any changes they intended. Participants will have 15 days to respond with any additional changes.

In some cases, the interviewer may ask for a second interview with a participant to follow up on issues that come up throughout the process of concurrent data collection and analysis. If the participant agrees, the interviewer and participant will repeat the member checking process outlined above, unless the second interview is given prior to this process.

APPENDIX D

TABLE D 1

Data extraction table for Indigenous Research conducted 1997-2015.

Authors, year & Publication.	Topic/ Region	Participants Context/ Indigenous community	Theoretical framework/ Indigenous Epistemologies	Indigenous Methods used/study design	Analytical process/ interpretation	Re-storying/ representation	Outcomes for community	Researcher positionality/ situatedness
1. Atleo, M. R. 2009. <i>Alberta Journal of Educational Research</i> , 55 (4)	Aboriginal learning ideology/ Pedagogy. BC	Five Nuuchah-nulth Elders (Coast Salish FN BC)	Seven principles of storywork of Coast Salish FN Elders, “4Rs & 4Ds”, Indigenous Nuuchah-nulth philosophy	Decolonized methodology Storywork: narratives about ‘Umeek’, the “First Whaler”. Five ‘interviews’ of Elders.	metaphoric mapping, narrative analysis.	Metaphorical mapping strategy will identify gaps between Indigenous and western learning theory.	“To provide emancipatory insights for aboriginal learning in contemporary educational settings.” P. 454.	No explicit positionality in article but M. Atleo member of the Ahousaht First Nation, B.C.
2. Bell, N. 2013. <i>Canadian Journal of Native Education</i> , 36(1)	Indigenous culture-based education (K-12). ON	Off-reserve Anishinaabe children in Peterborough ON.	Medicine Wheel: core concepts of wholeness, balance, connection, and harmony. Grand Father Teachings/Values of the Anishinaabek (Courage, honest, humility, respect, truth, love and wisdom)	Case study on culturally relevant education. 3 Talking circles, Informal interviews, Advisory committee with guidance by Elders,	Medicine wheel guided program ongoing evaluation, Elders were asked to spend time in school and provide feedback regarding implementation of Anishinaabe worldview.	The creation of a learning program that existed as a case study of Indian control of education in praxis.	The main goal of the Anishinaabe Bimaandiziwin cultural healing learning program was to give back to Anishinaabe children and youth – to provide culturally relevant education based on Indigenous worldview.	Nicole Bell us Anishinaabe of the Bear Clan from Kitigan Zibi First Nation – involved personally in project.
3. Clark, N., Drolet, J., Arnouse, M., (Shuswap), E., Walton, P., Tamburro, P. R., Mathews, N., Derrick, J., Michaud, V., & Armstrong, J. 2009. <i>Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal & Indigenous Community Health</i> .	Culturally safe/best practices in social work. Several First Nations included.	Elders, Aboriginal students of social work (several First Nations included)	Intersectional framework – working with an intersectional team of Elders and urban Aboriginal community agency, Aboriginal faculty members.	Community-based-participatory-action-research in collaboration with Elders and urban Aboriginal, Aboriginal faculty members. Culturally safe meetings /Day long retreat, Talking circles, Storytelling, Advisory committee that included Elders giving guidance and leadership on ethics, protocol & research questions.	“Melq’ilwiye” Coming together and looking in One direction: working together to develop the best practices in social work.	Narratives and stories about culturally safe and intersectional research.	Shifting power relations in social work, making it client centered. Will benefit current student and their children.	Indigenous researchers, (Métis, Shuswap, Abenaki, Shawnee & Mohawk).
4. Dumbrill & Green, 2008. <i>Social Work Education</i> vol 27 (5)	Indigenous knowledge in the academy. SK	Post-secondary teaching institutions/ Academic space.	Critical anti-racism; whiteness theory; traditional aboriginal teachings (Medicine wheel). Using decolonizing education theory,	Narrative approach. Storytelling.	Analysis of story from Indigenous perspective. Medicine wheel to analyse and reconceptualize academic space.	Reconfigure academic space following the teachings of the Medicine wheel to include I.K	Creating space for Indigenous knowledge within post-secondary Eurocentric institutions.	Two researchers, one white male originally from UK and second female from Haisla nation.

5. Edge, L., & McCallum, T. 2006. <i>Pimatisiwin: A Journal of Aboriginal & Indigenous Community Health</i> , 4(2).	Traditional health/healing knowledge. Multiple regions: BC, AB, SK, MA, ON, NWT.	20 Métis Elders from across the country	Traditional Métis knowledge – not explicit	Community-based research for the enhancement of Métis health (3 years) a series of national and regional gatherings of Métis Elders, Engaging Elders as equitable partners in research, Talking circles. Cultural protocols followed.	Narrative analysis of stories and life stories.	Development of a series of booklets on Métis perspectives about health and healing. Métis center web page, Métis Cook book,	enhancement of Métis health. Preservation of traditional healing knowledge. Revitalize Métis traditional health and healing practices	Cree Métis researcher from Métis center – in collaboration with Cree Métis elder.
6.& 7 Graveline, F. J. 2001; 2002; <i>Canadian Journal of Native Education</i> , 25(1) ; 26 (1)	Indigenous education. Classroom practice. MA.	Metis (Cree) Indigenous woman	Indigenous First Nations epistemology	autoethnography Re-telling Re-storying	Share and analyze her personal experience through the lens of aboriginal spirituality and pedagogy.	Poetic Metaphoric rendition Personal subjective experiences	Revitalize Indigenous education within Eurocentric institution. Reclaim research. Resist dominant discourses	Métis (Cree) scholar
8. Hanson, I & Hampton, M. 2000. <i>Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health Vol 19 (1)</i>	Mental health/resilience of residential school survivors SK	Six Elders, Cree, Saulteaux First Nation, Nakota	Community psychology paradigm – focusing on competence, strengths and wellness instead of pathologies.	Narrative inquiry research method. Storytelling. Offerings made to elders of tobacco.	Holistic content method of narrative analysis “Empathic reading”	Reinterpreting from an Indigenous perspective qualities portrayed in Euro Canadian literature negatively.	Explore the cultural and psychological strengths of First Nations residential school survivors.	First author is a Saulteaux First Nations member, and a residential school survivors & second author is non-Indigenous.
9. Healey, G. 2014. <i>International Journal of Circumpolar Health</i> , 73 (1).	Sexual health of Inuit adolescents in NU	Inuit parents from 3 communities in Nunavut.	Modified grounded theory -aligned with Inuit ways of knowing – Specifically following <i>Piliriqatiginniq</i> Partnership community health model (5 Inuit concepts)	Community-based participatory research on sexual health at the request of community members. Designed and implemented in partnership with 3 NU communities. Interviews with Inuit parents, Open ended questions, English and Inuktitut.	Data analyzed through a process of immersion and crystallization analogous to Inuit concept of “all knowing coming into one” (p. 3)	Academic article includes the voices of Inuit parents on discussing sexual health with their kids – it highlights importance of elders as supports for young people.	The study findings provide direction to public health programmes services and practitioners to support more parents-youth-elders dialogue on sexual health in Nunavut.	The researcher is from born and raised in Iqaluit, Nunavut and is familiar with community and territorial research protocols.
10. Iseke, J. M. 2010. <i>Canadian Journal of Native Education</i> , 33(1)	Métis Cree traditional knowledge/ ways of knowing. Alberta, SK	4 Cree Métis Elders from Alberta, SK	Cree/Métis epistemology about stories. Based on respectful relations.	Sharing storytelling sessions (audio-video taped). Talking circles. Cultural protocols observed, tobacco offered to Elders, Emphasis on responsibility and relationships with Elders.	Indigenous research as resistance, as a process of recovery.	Storying, producing respectful research in a collaborative manner with Elders.	Community healing, using research to bring back to life Indigenous teachings.	Métis woman researcher, positions herself, the research and then reflects on process of research.
11. Iseke, J. M. 2011. <i>Equity & Excellence in Education</i> , 44(3)	Cultural/traditional knowledge, preservation of culture through digital storytelling	5 Cree/Métis Elders with focus on grandmother: Alma Desjarlais.	Indigenous knowledge- Respectful relations	Working with Elders in a collaborative program – Indigenous storytelling, tobacco offerings, talking circles, closing ceremony, research as ceremony	Narrative analysis of stories. Respectful relations.	Documentary, self-representation of Indigenous peoples, life and witnessing of Elder	process of community and relationships, “for help my own children understand their Métis heritage” (p.314),	Métis woman, researcher, educator, filmmaker.

12. Kerr, J. & Parent A. 2015. <i>Canadian Journal of Native Education</i> , 38(1)	Teacher education. Incorporating IK in teacher edu. ON.	Teacher ed. candidates/ researchers.	Decolonizing pedagogies/edu. Indigenous storywork (Archibald). Ethical relationality (Donald)	Engaging collaboratively with Indigenous scholars and community. Storywork (Archibald). Storytelling, Self-reflexivity.	Collaborative Indigenous storywork (Archibald). Nuu-chah-nult (perspective Alteo)		Disrupt the dynamics of WK and engage with Indigeneity – include IK as knw in teacher edu.	Researchers present themselves, their background and relationship to IK. First Nations and Settler.
13. Kitchen, J., Cherubini, L., Trudeau, L., & Hodson, J. 2010. <i>Alberta Journal of Educational Research</i> , 56(2)	Aboriginal teacher education programs ON	6 aboriginal teachers from diverse communities (Mohawk, Anishinaabe, Métis)	Tribal Critical Race Theory (BrayBoy, 2005) adapted from Critical Race Theory	Wildfire research method. Elder played crucial role in gathering. Aboriginal educator as facilitator and co-researcher, Talking circles.	Grounded theory	Articulate how Aboriginal teacher education can serve self-determined needs of Aboriginal communities in Ontario and across Canada. Maintain distinct voices of Aboriginal participants.	Help reframe education issues in a meaningful way for members of Aboriginal communities and respect their ways of living. Inform a reconceptualization of Abo. Teach, edu. in Ontario.	2 Indigenous members of the Tecumseh Center for Aboriginal research and education, 2 non-Indigenous researchers.
14. Latulippe, N. 2015. <i>The International Indigenous Policy Journal</i> , 6(2)	Indigenous knowledge and Sustainability in Canadian fisheries. BC, NS, ON, NU	Community members of Coastal Indigenous communities (Pacific, Atlantic, Arctic & Inland) Nipissing First Nation (ON), Assembly of First Nations	The Two-Row Wampum Treaty belt as conceptual framework with values of peace, respect, and friendship. Decolonizing theoretical approach. Respect for Indigenous methodologies	Collaborative research with Indigenous communities, Self-reflexivity, Decolonizing research practice.	Reciprocity, collaborative research, relational accountability.	Ongoing – study not finished at the writing of article.	To explore the relationships between knowledge holders resource users, and decision makers involved in the Lake Nipissing fishery.	Non-Indigenous researcher reflecting on her own positionality and how she can engage with IK respectfully.
15. Lavallee, L. F., 2009. <i>International journal of qualitative methods</i>	Mental health recovery & physical wellness for Indigenous peoples. ON.	17 Indigenous urban participants, Cree, Ojibwa, Métis.	Anishnaabe teachings, such as Seven Generations Teaching. Medicine wheel. Holistic healing. Decolonizing framework	Indigenous research study using talking circles Anishnaabe symbol-based reflections	Narrative and visual holistic symbol analysis	Documenting the impacts of the physical and cultural program on Indigenous people. Creating recommendations for future research.	Going beyond western notions of recovery, including Indigenous worldviews in mental health recovery theories.	Explicit researcher positionality as Algonquin, Cree and Métis woman.
16. Lavallee, L. F., & Poole, J. M. 2009. <i>International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction</i> , 8(2).	Mental health recovery for Indigenous peoples. ON.	Participants from the Native Canadian Center in Toronto that went to physical activity and cultural program	Anishnaabe teachings, such as Seven Generations Teaching. Medicine wheel. Holistic healing.	Qualitative research study, over three years, Interviews with program participants Talking circle. Storytelling, Personal narratives	Narrative analysis of personal stories.	Documenting the impacts of the physical and cultural program on Indigenous people. Creating recommendations for future research.	Going beyond western notions of recovery, including Indigenous worldviews in mental health recovery theories.	No explicit positionality.
17. Lavoie, C., Mark, M.-P., & Jenniss, B. 2014. <i>Diaspora, Indigenous, and</i>	Early Language acquisition/Indigenizing pedagogy, QC	Unamen Shipu Innu community, Kindergarten children, teachers, parents and elders.	IK (non-specific) Indigenous informed vocab teaching methods. Multiliteracies.	Decolonizing language teaching methods by introducing IK and multiliteracies pedagogies to K teaching. Storytelling Elder participation,	analysis using a triangulation of the different methods,	Community-based-learning – reintroducing storytelling session with Elders as part of K teaching, decolonizing/indigenizing	Research for change in how French is taught – Indigenizing the curriculum, using culturally relevant themes, themes and vocabulary.	Indigenous teachers as co-researchers of non-indigenous researcher.

Minority Education, 8(4)				field obs. Respectful relations, Indigenous teachers as co-researchers. Community-based research.		language education in QC.		
18. Pazderka, H., Desjarlais, B., Makokis, L., MacArthur, C., Steinhauer, S., Hapchyn, C. A., Hanson, T., Van Kuppeveld, N., & Bodor, R. 2014. <i>First Peoples Child & Family Review</i> , 9 (1).	Childhood attachment within Cree families, Saddle Lake AB.	Elders from Saddle Lake Cree Nation, AB	Cree teachings on early development, Importance of kinship, relationality,	Nitsiyihkason “my name is” Project started in ceremony and shaped by community, elders shared ideas about project and named project, Talking circles, Sharing stories in circles in Cree, Blessing of methodology, Traditional protocols of reciprocity using tobacco and cloth offerings. Thanksgiving ceremony.	Transcriptions of interviews, talking circles and thematic analysis.	Revalorization of traditional childrearing practices – Creating a resources manual to provide readers a better understanding of traditional practices and help build a platform to better relate with Indigenous children and families.	Develop a resource to promote childhood attachment within Cree families that are culturally relevant.	Team of researchers – no clear positionality.
19. Restoule, J. 2005	Post-secondary educational experience. ON.	Urban Indigenous students in post-secondary edu.	Decolonizing process.	Qualitative study with Indigenous university students. Talking circles.	Narrative and thematic analysis of talking circles data.	Research article with his analysis.	Identify recommendations to indigenize education in earlier stages of education	Dokis First Nation researcher personally interested in decolonization Edu.
20. Socha, T., Zahaf, M., Chambers, L., Abraham, R., & Fiddler, T. 2012. <i>Journal of Aboriginal Health</i> , 8(2)	Food security in Aboriginal communities. ON	18 community members Nishnawbe Aski Nation (First Nations police in ON representing 49 FN across treaty 5, 9 territory	Indigenous story telling as a narrative framework. Holistic decolonizing approach.	2-year PAR Collaborative partnership Nishnawbe Aski Nation. Talking Circles, Elder guidance. Miichim reference group guided the research design and ethics protocol. Opening research with tobacco and cloth offerings to Elder	Narrative analysis approach. Preservation of IK of plant and food resources.	Digital stories: living documents: 5 videos in Indigenous languages about food and plant knowledge; Feasting for Change Plant Knowledge Cards in 3 Indigenous languages.	Creation and distribution of Digital stories: living documents: 5 videos in Indigenous languages about food and plant knowledge; Feasting for Change Plant Knowledge Cards in 3 Indigenous languages participation by 5000 Indigenous community members to events.	Euro-Canadian researcher from University of Victoria, BC. Aboriginal Health dietitian and feasting for change activity coordinator from Rainy River FN, ON.
21& 22. Thorpe, N. 1997; 1998; Arctic; Vol 50 (4); Vol 51 (4)	I.E.K/ T.E.K Inuit. Traditional ecological knowledge. NWT	Inuit communities of Umingmaktok, Kingaok. Ikaluktutiak and Kugluktuk in NWT.	Inuit traditional knowledge	Two-year study “Tuktu and Nogak project”; Community-based participation. Responsive to needs of community. Goals set in consultation with elder advisory board; Documenting an Elder youth camp (EYC); Semi-structured interviews-conversation with Inuit hunters.	Document Inuit knowledge about caribou and calving grounds – use an Inuit perspective to appreciate the importance of preserving this knowledge.	Preserve and communicate Inuit knowledge.	Cultural continuity through organisation of EYC. Inuit develop research skills and offer training opportunities for local community members.	Non-Indigenous woman living for extended period in NWT.

23. Sterling, S. 2002. <i>Canadian Journal of Native Education</i> , 26(1).	Indigenous education, BC	Nlakapamux cultural professors: grandmothers.	Nlakapamux cultural knowledge and teachings	Retelling Narratives/life stories, Autoethnography grandmother/elder stories.	Through the lens of Nlakapamux worldview	Re-telling grandmother stories.	Reviving, restoring cultural identity. Revalorizing traditional Nlakapamux education	Nlakapamux scholar
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Table D2

Data extraction table for Indigenous Research conducted between 2015-2020

Authors, year & Publication.	Topic Area	Participants Context/ Indigenous community	Theoretical framework/ Indigenous Epistemologies	Study design Indigenous Methods used	Outcomes for community	Analytical process/ interpretation	Re-storying/ representation	Researcher positionality/ situatedness
1. Bagelman, J., Devereaux, F., & Hartley, R. 2016. <i>International Journal of Indigenous Health</i> , 11(1)	Feasting for Change” Revitalize traditional food systems.	Nine Coast Salish First Nations on southern Vancouver Island, BC. Events reached over 5000 community members.	First Nations protocols, Decolonizing and self-determination for Indigenous peoples.	Community-based solidaristic project/program to revitalize traditional food use and knowledge Elders in leadership role, Conversations with community members on needs of communities in terms of food and nutrition. Feasting, Sharing stories.	Living documents: Five videos in Indigenous languages about food and plant knowledge. Feasting for Change knowledge cards: images of plants in 3 different Indigenous languages,	Narrative analysis in order to produce living documents for community based on experience of Feasts.	Living documents: Five videos in Indigenous languages about food and plant knowledge. Feasting for Change knowledge cards: images of plants in 3 different Indigenous languages.	University of Victoria non-Indigenous researcher and Aboriginal health dietitian and Rainy River FN coordinator and youth advisor.
2. Deer, S. 2016. <i>In Education</i> , 22(1)	the role of legends and storytelling in early Indigenous childhood practices.	49 children attending Kanien'keh a:ka (Mohawk) early childhood facility (Kahnawake) and parents and teachers. QC.	Indigenous ways of knowing and teaching	Qualitative research study. Observation and fieldnotes, Interviews & semi-structured interviews mirroring reciprocity and relational dialogue, Observations from insider perspective (emic).	Contributing to Maintaining and reviving IK in early education educational setting	Narrative analysis of interviews.	Using legends and storytelling as a guiding tool to re-evaluate education in Kahnawake. Indigenous scholars as working towards recognition and validity of Indigenous culture.	Mohawk researcher – directly involved with research context.
3. Delormier, T., Horn-Miller, K., McComber, A., & Marquis, K. 2017. <i>Maternal and Child Nutrition</i> , 13.	Reclaiming food security in the Mohawk community of Kahnawake .	17 keys informants from Mohawk community of Kahnawake , QC.	<i>Sustainable self-determination.</i> Decolonizing framework.	Qualitative research, Interviews small group interviews with community members	Restore food security through exploring grassroots examples of food security initiatives.	Through a decolonizing lens and an Indigenous perspective.	Create knowledge geared to goals of self-determination.	Research team made up of Mohawk community members.
4. Freeman, S., Martin, J., Nash, C., Hausknecht, S., & Skinner, K. 2020.	Digital storytelling workshop to foster development of intergenerational relationships and	Elders, Upper year elementary students, teachers. Nak'azdli Whut'en First Nation, BC.	Decolonizing framework. Shared learning; authentic partnership; deconstruction of power relations,	Community based participatory action research approach. Co-creation of project between academics and community members. Advisory committee named the project.	The creation of 10 Digital storytelling workshop to foster development of intergenerational relationships and preserve culture.	Qualitative descriptive and thematic analysis	Community viewing session of all the digital stories created by students	Indigenous and non-Indigenous engaged in process of co-learning and co-creating project.

<i>Canadian Journal on Aging</i> , 39(2), 284–293.	preserve culture. Nak'azdli First Nation, BC Lha'hutit'e n project.		reciprocal relationships.	Emphasis on co-learning. Creation of digital storytelling. Debriefing focus groups.	Using technology to bridge gap between generation.			
5. Gesink, D., Whiskeyjack, L., Suntuens, T., Mihic, A., & McGilvery, P. 2016. <i>Child Abuse & Neglect</i> , 58.	Sexual health and sexual abuse in Indigenous communities.	25 Community members at Saddle Lake Cree Nation. AB.	Grounded theory informed by core principles of <i>nēhiyaw</i> epistemology: Natural Law, “everything is related”, teaching of <i>wahkohtowin</i> , and Medicine Wheel.	PAR: participatory research approach. Collaborative project Relational paradigm with Saddle Lake Cree Nation and University of Toronto. Community members as partners and co-researchers. Community questions and methods given priority.	Use results from study to inform community-based community-led HIV prevention intervention centered on restoration activities related to sexual health: STI/HIV.	Thematic analysis of interviews, using Medicine wheel and teaching of <i>wahkohtowin</i>	Thick descriptions with illustrative passages quoted verbatim from interviews – preserving knowledge as much as possible.	Two non-Cree researchers from U of T – not involved in interviews co-led research with 2 Cree community partners -
6. Howell, T., Auger, M., Gomes, T., Brown, F. L., & Leon, A. Y. 2016. <i>International Journal of Indigenous Health</i> , 11(1),	Cultural land-based approach to Health and wellness.	35 Indigenous participants (18-69) First Nation and Métis from Vancouver Aboriginal community, BC.	Grounded theory. 4Rs: respect, reciprocity, responsibility and relevance. ‘right relationship’	PAR: Participatory-Action-Research. Consultation with 15 Elders. Health circles, Talking circles.	health program for Indigenous participants over 7 weeks.	Analytical thematic analysis of qualitative data	health program for Indigenous participants over 7 weeks.	Indigenous and non-Indigenous collaboration.
7. Leigh Drost, J. 2019. <i>The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine</i> . Vol 25 (1)	Developing the Alliances to Expand Traditional Indigenous Healing Practices Within Alberta Health Service.	Alberta Health Services. Two Elders, One cultural helper, 3 Indigenous community members (Alberta)	Ethical space (Ermine, Cree ethicist) Cultural safety from Maori nurses working in Health care	Participatory-Action-Research methodology Semi-structured in-depth Interviews Focus groups Follow-up interviews	find strategies for implementing traditional Indigenous healing practices in AHS (sweat lodges)	Comparative methodology using grounded theory	Article – ongoing research.	No clear positionality
8. Marsh, T. N., Cote-Meek, S., Young, N. L., Najavits, L. M., & Toulouse, P. 2016. <i>International Indigenous Policy Journal</i> , 7(2)	Indigenous healing and seeking safety: A blended implementation project for intergenerational trauma and substance use disorders.	12 Urban Indigenous women & 12 Indigenous men (Cree; Ojibway, Metis), Northern Ontario.	Two-Eyed Seeing approach. Medicine Wheel	Consultation with Elders Aboriginal advisory group Semi-structured interviews traditional healing practices Sweat lodge, Drumming, Smudging Healers/Elders Healing circles. Sharing circles.	As a 7-week Indigenous health and healing program.	Qualitative thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews.	As a 7-week Indigenous health and healing program.	Indigenous authors who affirm self-determination for Indigenous communities
9. Marsh, T. N., Marsh, D. C., Ozawagosh, J., & Ozawagosh, F.	Using the sweat lodge ceremony as a healing intervention for	12 Urban Indigenous women & 12 Indigenous men (Cree;	Health and wellness teachings of Elders.	Elder involvement Semi-structured interviews. Healing circles. Sharing circles.	As a 7-week Indigenous health and healing program.	Qualitative thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews.	As a 7-week Indigenous health and healing program.	Indigenous authors who affirm self-determination for Indigenous communities.

2018. <i>The International Indigenous Policy Journal</i> , 9(2)	intergenerational trauma and substance use.	Ojibway, Metis), Northern Ontario.		Indigenous health and healing program that includes Indigenous traditional healing practices.				
10. Maranzan, K. A., Hudson, R., Scofield, R., McGregor, M., & Seguin, R. 2018. <i>International Journal of Indigenous Health</i> , 13(1),	Listen to and understand the experiences of Indigenous in dealing with sexual abuse.	Ontario Thunder Bay Area 22 participants for talking circles and 103 in survey. Ojibwa; Cree; Métis.	Medicine Wheel.	Collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Indigenous advisory committee Elders. Talking circles. Opening ceremony for circles Interviews surveys	Snapshot booklet and community presentations.	Qualitative thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews.	Snapshot booklet and community presentations.	Indigenous facilitators for talking circles.
11. Martens, T., Cidro, J., Hart, M. A., & McLachlan, S. 2016. <i>Journal of Indigenous Social Development</i> , 5(1).	Understanding Indigenous food sovereignty.	Indigenous participants from 32 communities in BC, AB, SK, MA.	Traditional embodied and experiential Indigenous knowledge, 4Rs: respect, reciprocity, responsibility and relevance.	Circle methodology, Relational accountability 4Rs: respect, reciprocity, responsibility and relevance.	Supporting Indigenous food sovereignty by developing an Indigenous research paradigm	Metaphor analysis: HANDS of interviews from indigenous perspective.	Indigenous research presenting research in a manner consistent with teachings she received from Elders	Indigenous research
12. McGinnis, A., Tesarek Kincaid, A., Barrett, M. J., & Ham, C. 2019. <i>Ecopsychology</i> , 11(3),	Animal-Human Relationships as a Doorway to Indigenous Holistic Wellness.	6 Elders, 16 community members. First Nations, BC.	<i>All our relations:</i> As an overarching epistemological Indigenous construct. Conceptual framework of <i>Four blankets metaphor:</i> holistic	Community-based research partnership. Talking circles about relationship with animals. Offerings by and to Elders. Storytelling.	Acknowledging the role of animals in Indigenous health and wellness. Research to facilitate Indigenous' peoples healing journeys.	"four layered approach to data analysis to align it with Indigenous research methods and with Indigenous epistemology: holistic, interconnectedness.	Research presents the stories of elders about their relationships with animals.	Team of researchers: 2 community researchers; 7 university researchers
13. Morris, M. 2016 <i>Études/Inuit/Studies</i> Vol 40, (1)	Youth violence prevention and health promotion.	Nunavut Indigenous communities, <i>Nunavut Sivunitsavut</i> students.	Inuit values as included in IQ.	PAR: participatory-action-research. Inuit Advisory committee with youth. Collaborative, relationship based with Inuit women's organization. Online Surveys for youth Focus groups with Inuit practices integrated and with Elder guidance.	New and relevant data on violence prevention that can be used to inform new ways to prevent violence in youth.	Qualitative thematic analysis.	Postdoctoral research project – under founded so not able to do knowledge transfer with youth.	Non-Inuit research with experience as community-based researcher in Nunavut so with prior relationships.
14. Petrucka, P., Bickford, D. Bassendowski, S., Goodwill, W., Wajunta, C., Yuzicappi, B., Yuzicappi, L., Hackett, P., Jeffery, B., &	Positive leadership, legacy, lifestyles, attitudes, and activities for Aboriginal youth (PLAY)	78 student participants from Standing Buffalo First Nation. SK.	Holistic approach to health based on indigenous epistemologies.	A wise practices approach: locally relevant, respectful, Community-based participatory research which involved Aboriginal youth as researchers (6). Culture camp at local elementary	Culture camp taken up even after the end of the research project. Emphasize need for wise practices approach.	Wise practices approach.	Co-creating new knowledge with community partners.	Indigenous and non-Indigenous researcher – used pre-existing family and social contacts at Standing Buffalo First Nation to conduct research. Elders also part of research team.

Rauliuk, M. 2016. <i>International Journal of Indigenous Health</i> , 11(1).	cultural camps to emphasize importance of including Indigenous participation in research			school with learning circles. Aboriginal ways of learning privileged. Thematic modules.				
15. Robinson, D. B., Barrett, J., & Robinson, I. 2016. <i>In Education</i> , 22(1)	Culturally relevant physical education for Mi'kmaq communities in NS, QC, PEI.	7 Mi'kmaw Elders from 4 Mi'kma'ki regions, and 3 Mi'kmaw communities.	Medicine Wheel, Storywork as a narrative and critical research approach,	Decolonizing research approach/perspective, Give voice to Elders and support efforts of community members to bring about change. Storywork Conversations with Elders and community leaders on topic of relevant physical education	Develop culturally relevant physical education in collaboration with community leaders and elders. Follow-up research – use of Medicine wheel and talking circles.	Researchers and participants as co-learners (Chilisa) so data-analysed and meaning co-constructed with research participants.	Article but develop culturally relevant Physical Curriculum.	Two Euro-Canadian scholars who are respecting Indigenous ways of knowing and doing – and feel well equipped to do Indigenous research through their relationships
16. Rowe, G., Straka, S., Hart, M., Callahan, A., Robinson, D., & Robson, G. 2020. <i>Canadian Journal on Aging /La Revue Canadienne Du Vieillissement</i> , 39(2)	Prioritizing Indigenous Elders' Knowledge for Intergenerational Well-being.	12 Indigenous Elders, Treaty 1 territory. MA	Indigenist Anti-colonial	Sharing circles Stories	Restoration of the traditional role of Elders in communities and in regard to health services	Cree method of analysis. Deep reflection.	Article	Two Cree researchers and one settler ally.
17. Sasakamoose, J., Bellegarde, T., Sutherland, W., Pete, S., & McKay-McNabb, K. 2017. <i>International Indigenous Policy Journal</i> , 8(4).	Culture-as-intervention ; development of an Indigenous culturally responsive theory (ICRT).	Indigenous First Nations Saulteaux, Cree, Dene, Dakota, Lakota and Nakota of SK.	'Grounded in a Treaty perspective' Ethical space Two-Eyes seeing	Community-based research strategy to develop a First Nations health and wellness approach.	development of a community-based family healing and wellness center (BC) restore	Two-Eyes seeing	Creating an Indigenous model to reframe, rename, reclaim and restore Indigenous methodological approaches.	Indigenous researchers (Ojibwe, Cree) that see themselves as "new generation of Indigenous scholars that can do the work from within."
18. Smith, M., McDonald, C., Bruce, A., & Green, J. 2019. <i>International Journal of Indigenous Health</i> , 14(2)	Kidney Chronic disease stories and Indigenous experiences in health care.	Anishinaabe (Ojibwe) and Potawatomi, ON.	Sweet Grass porcupine quill box epistemology	Sweet Grass porcupine quill box methodology Elder engagement Sharing circles Storytelling	Explore stories using Sweet Grass porcupine quill box methodology	Sweet Grass porcupine quill box methodology and epistemology	Stories about kidney disease through Sweet Grass porcupine quill box methodology	Indigenous research conducting research within her own community.

19. Stelmach, Kovach & Steeves. 2017. <i>Alberta Journal of Educational Research</i> , vol 63(1).	What helps and what hinders Indigenous high school students' learning.	75 students, From six schools, Cree, Dene, Saulteaux. AB, SK.	Indigenous Framework theory (Kovach, 2016). Decolonizing framework.	Focus groups-circles. Conversations.	Making voices of students heard and further 'the student voice agenda'.	Indigenous theoretical lens as an analytical tool.	Shedding more light on an issue that still requires attention.	Team of 5 Indigenous researchers and 3 non-Indigenous researchers.
20. St-Denis, N., & Walsh, C. 2016. <i>Journal of Indigenous Social Development</i> , 5(1).	Reclaiming Indigenous Identity	Indigenous researcher, Calgary, AB.	Indigenous holistic epistemology: warrior philosophy.	Autoethnography.	Exemplifying a reclaiming journey.	Narrative analysis/ autoethnography.	Rendering of the reclaiming of Indigenous identity as a journey – a narrative.	Indigenous researcher that identifies as Quebequoise with Mi'kmaq and Mohawk ancestry.
21. St-Denis, N., & Walsh, C. 2016. <i>Journal of Indigenous Social Development</i> , 6(2).	Integrating Indigenous healing practices into social work with urban Indigenous peoples	Indigenous researcher, Calgary, AB.	Post-colonial theory and Anti-colonial theory for a decolonizing framework.	Autoethnography	Advocating for cultural ways to serve Indigenous urban peoples	Narrative analysis/ autoethnography.	Narrative of the personal journey as Indigenous social worker.	Indigenous researcher that identifies as Quebequoise with Mi'kmaq and Mohawk ancestry.
22. Tobias, J. K., & Richmond, C. 2016. <i>International Journal of Indigenous Health</i> , 11(1).	Knowledge translation into practice – community health.	Elders and youth from Ojibway First Nations on the North shore of Lake Superior: Biigtiging Nishnaabeg and Batchewana, ON.	Hybrid approach that privileged Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing.	Collaboration between team of Indigenous and nonindigenous researchers and First Nations. Community based participatory research: recruitment of youth research assistants. Interviews with Elders and ceremonies. Talking circles, feasts. Integrated knowledge translation as methodology.	A 2-day Elder Celebration event held within each community.	Integrated knowledge translation	A 2-day Elder Celebration event held within each community.	between team of Indigenous and nonindigenous researchers.
23. Twance, M. 2019. <i>Environmental education research</i> , Vol 25, (9).	Learning from Land and water. Land-based Indigenous education.	6 Elders from First Nation community of Batchewana, Ontario.	Indigenous decolonizing perspective. Indigenous philosophy: holism, interrelatedness.	Storywork methodology 4Rs: respect, responsibility, reciprocity, relevance. Conversational method. Ceremony. Talking/sharing circles.	Revalorization of Indigenous knowledge on Agawa rock markings.	Inductive thematic analysis.	Indigenizing land education.	Indigenous researcher from the community where research was conducted – insider perspective.