

**KAANDOSSWIN, THIS IS HOW WE COME TO KNOW!  
INDIGENOUS GRADUATE RESEARCH IN THE ACADEMY:  
WORLDVIEWS AND METHODOLOGIES**

**by**

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**A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counselling Psychology  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the  
University of Toronto**

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**KAANDOSSWIN, THIS IS HOW WE COME TO KNOW!  
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Doctor of Philosophy, 2008

Kathleen Elaine Absolon

Department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counselling Psychology  
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**Abstract**

Boozhoo nindiwaynimaaginidok. Chi miigwechiwendam noongiizhgad (Greetings to all my relations. I am grateful today). The purpose of this study was to describe conscious Indigenous researchers' methodologies and experiences of thesis research in the academy. It presents Indigenous research methodologies and explores the diverse and varied ways that conscious Indigenous researchers are conducting their thesis research within the academy. My commitment was to honour Indigenous researchers, knowledge and ways of knowledge production. This thesis is written from an Anishinaabek perspective with a goal of 'lifting up' Indigenous ways of coming to know in the academy.

My study draws from an examination of eleven Indigenous thesis projects and conversations with nine Indigenous thesis researchers who are engaged in the academy and who utilize Indigenous paradigms and worldviews in their research. This study documents their experiences, wisdoms, knowledge, methodologies, frustrations and struggles with employing Indigenous research in the academy. The teachings of the land guided my search and the stories of such are contained herein. Indigenous research is represented holistically and a petal flower becomes the holistic representation within which Indigenous research methodologies are framed.

This study reveals that the roots of Indigenous research are embedded in Indigenous worldviews and paradigms. Central to Indigenous research methodologies are Indigenous researchers and their unique locations, histories, experiences, values, traditions, languages and

consciousness. Employing Indigenous research constitutes a journey that affects the entire process. Concepts such as interrelationships, holism, reciprocity are integral to Indigenous research methodologies. Indigenous researchers shared their experiences of doing Indigenous thesis research in the academy and shared barriers, challenges, tensions and antagonistic issues. This study reveals that Indigenous research within the academy is gaining recognition as Indigenous researchers retheorize, redevelop methodologies and enact their research agendas. Finally, these contributions collectively and undoubtedly illuminate that Indigenous research methodologies in the academy are forging pathways enabling Indigenous researchers' opportunities to conduct research using our own worldviews, knowledge and methodologies.

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Miigwech to my mother who read and affirmed the knowledge, experiences and history presented in this dissertation. My dad was a big fan and thank you for the words of support. My brothers and sisters cheered me on and kept me grounded as I was reminded about the importance of our families, children and communities. Ultimately, through our work this is *who* we serve.

Nindaanis (my daughter) Akiesha and Ningozis (my son) Cody witnessed most of my process of gathering and searching. I would like to thank them for being who they are. They would ask me from time to time if I was done my research yet inquiring when I would be free. I would show them what I was doing and explain my process. Thank you for asking and for caring enough to see how it was going. I love you both and see how special you both really are. To my eldest daanis, Amanda, I am grateful for her maturity and her own academic goals as she completed an undergraduate degree at Ryerson University. I love you and am so proud of you and your accomplishments.

And I am indebted to those who shared with me. I would like to acknowledge those Indigenous researchers who left solid footprints and whose path I could follow because of their

work. The people who participated in this search and who generously shared their knowledge and wisdom with me. And congratulations to those that completed their doctoral theses! I hope that this thesis is what you too can feel proud of. I thoroughly enjoyed our conversations and sharing along the way. Because of our sharing, I felt supported and inspired in my journey. It's an amazing circle and I am privileged to be a part of it.

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Finally, we never really walk alone and there are many other friends and community members who walk with me and who have supported my journey. Miigwech to my community, Flying Post First Nation for all their support. Miigwech to my many Anishinaabe brothers and sisters across Turtle Island (Nimpkii penas, Zaugauskii, Merle, Brenda, Carrie, Shelley C, Shelley S, Violet, Sandee, Darrell, Susan and Gale). Miigwech for placing me in your prayers and for the long distance phone calls and support. Miigwech for encouraging me to persevere and persist on a journey that can, at times, feel lonely and alienating. You know who you are and because of your heartened support I continued.

## Contents

Abstract .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Dedication .....	ix
Part One: The Framework .....	1
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Locating My Self in My Search .....	2
Decolonizing and Indigenizing My Research .....	10
Language and Terminology .....	15
Chapter Outlines .....	18
Chapter Two: Background to Indigenous Research .....	20
Indigenous Peoples' Cultural History and Research .....	20
Oral Traditions and Narrative .....	21
A Critical Review of Western Research and Indigenous Peoples .....	25
Representation and Images in Written Text: A Critical Encounter .....	30
Allied Critiques of Euro-Western Research Methods .....	34
Indigenous Science and Western Science .....	39
Indigenous Knowledge .....	48
Chapter Three: My Methodology: A Journey of Making Meaning .....	52
Preparing .....	52
My search questions .....	52
The purpose of my search .....	52
Searching .....	53
How I searched and what I did .....	53
Searching for Indigenous theses .....	55
Searching for conversations .....	56
Making Meaning .....	58
Reading the landscape of the theses .....	58
Making meaning of the theses .....	59
Making meaning of the conversations .....	61
The learning circle as giving back .....	65
Part Two: Findings .....	70
Chapter Four: Introduction to Researchers and Researcher .....	70
Chapter Five: Indigenous Worldviews and Methodologies in the Academy .....	91
Introduction .....	91
A Petal Flower .....	94
Chapter Six: Roots: Paradigms, Worldviews and Principles .....	101
Paradigms and Worldviews .....	101
Principles .....	117

Chapter Seven: The Centre Flower: Self as Central .....	123
Self .....	126
Location .....	128
Situating Self in the Search .....	132
Memory .....	136
Motive & Purpose .....	139
Search for Congruency .....	145
Chapter Eight: The Leaves: The Journey.....	150
An Organic Process.....	151
Traveling.....	155
Transformation.....	158
Healing.....	161
Chapter Nine: The Stem: Backbone and Supports .....	165
Critical Consciousness.....	166
The Role of Critically Conscious Indigenous Scholars .....	175
Indigenous Searchers' Strengths and Supports.....	183
Chapter Ten: The Petals: Diverse Methodologies .....	199
Spirit: Protocols, Ceremony and Honour.....	203
Heart: Relationships, Reciprocity and Community .....	207
Mind: Respecting Indigenous Knowledge.....	216
Body: Doing, Working and Creating.....	221
Chapter Eleven: Indigenous Thesis Research in the Academy .....	232
Introduction to the Enviro-Academic Context.....	232
Fences and Gatekeepers: Help or Hindrance? .....	232
Allies and the Committee.....	244
The Committee.....	247
Writing Oral Traditions and Other Ironies.....	250
Thorny Prickly Challenges .....	261
Chapter Twelve: Concluding Remarks .....	268
References.....	277

## Figures

<i>Figure 1.</i> Tapestry of Indigenous methodology.....	64
<i>Figure 2.</i> Shawane Dagoiwin learning circle.....	68
<i>Figure 3.</i> Dr. Michael Hart.....	79
<i>Figure 4.</i> Dr. Patricia McGuire.....	81
<i>Figure 5.</i> Dr. Dawn Marsden.....	83
<i>Figure 6.</i> Dr. Maggie Kovach.....	87
<i>Figure 7.</i> Dr. Raven Sinclair.....	88
<i>Figure 8.</i> Petal flowers.....	94
<i>Figure 9.</i> Wholistic representation: A petal flower.....	95
<i>Figure 10.</i> Petal flower illustration.....	97
<i>Figure 11.</i> Roots illustration.....	101
<i>Figure 12.</i> Centre flower illustration.....	123
<i>Figure 13.</i> Leaves illustration.....	150
<i>Figure 14.</i> Stem illustration.....	165
<i>Figure 15.</i> Petals illustration.....	199
<i>Figure 16.</i> Thorny prickly illustration.....	261

## Appendices

Appendix A: Personal Reflections.....	287
Appendix B: Information Letter.....	291
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form.....	293
Appendix D: Participant Consent to Release Photographs.....	296
Appendix E: The Interview Schedule for Individual Interviews.....	297
Appendix F: The Interview Schedule for the Learning Circle.....	298
Appendix G: The Learning Circle Handout.....	299
Appendix H: Analytic Framework for Dissertations.....	300

## **Dedication**

### **This thesis is dedicated to:**

My Cocomish and Shaumish who knew how to search the Anishinaabe way. Their spirits inspire me to remember who we are and what we know. They wanted us to know our identity and language as Anishinaabe and would have wanted these understandings and knowledge passed on.

My parents who taught me how to not get lost in the bush and for the opportunity to grow up with the space and freedom that living close to the land affords. My family who supported me through tough times.

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My Anishinaabe community and many dear friends who encouraged me to not get lost in the academic corridors and whose faith in me kept me going.

Chi Miigwech to all of you for your love!

## **Part One: The Framework**

### **Chapter One:**

#### **Introduction**

“Boozhoo G-chi’manidoo...  
Minogizhigokwe n’dizhnikas...  
Waabshishii n’dodem...  
Bijou midewiwin  
Anishinaabekwe n’dow  
Kakatush Ziibiing Flying Post n’doonjiba”

(K. Absolon, 2007)

“Kaandosswin, This is how we come to know” is a search for Indigenous methodologies by graduate Indigenous researchers in the academy. It describes the diverse and varied ways that Indigenous researchers are employing their worldviews and methodologies within the academy and their experiences. Actively engaging Indigenous worldviews in methodology has also been called ‘Indigenist’ research (Rigney, 1999; Smith, 2005). Using a critical analysis, this thesis first journeys over the general landscape of Western and Indigenous research. The search is a search for Indigenous ways of coming to know in the academy and the harvest of this search is holistically presented as a petal flower with roots (worldview), centre flower (self), leaves (journey), stem (analytical backbone) and petals (methods). Petal flowers themselves are diverse and varied as are Indigenous research methodologies, thus the type of petal flower is undefined. Soon after beginning this project I realized that the researchers’ experiences were as important as the methodologies they used and the two were interdependent. Thus, the enviro-academic context that influences Indigenous searchers’ ability or inability to employ Indigenous ways of searching are also explored.

This research combines a search into eleven selected theses by Indigenous graduate researchers in adult education, social work, Indigenous studies and sociology; conversations with nine Indigenous researchers in the academy (five are writers of the above mentioned theses); and a learning circle of fourteen Indigenous researchers. It is not exhaustive by any means but rather provides a general sense of Indigenous research methodologies used by graduate Indigenous researchers. Graduate theses provided a ready source of information about the context of Indigenous graduate research projects in terms of Indigenous research methodologies used and student experiences of Indigenous research in the academy. Their successful completion evidences an acceptance within the academy and establishes precedence of the application and legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge and methodologies in graduate research. During my own search I was committed to:

1. honouring the participants of my project and their work, and the sources of my and their knowledge and learning;
2. maintaining Indigenous ways at the center and not positioning them in comparison with western ways of knowledge production;
3. recognizing the variety of ways that participants have done Indigenous work without falling into comparing these against each other; and
4. maintaining Indigenous voices in the presentation and representation of my dissertation.

### ***Locating My Self in My Search***

I begin by locating “my self” because positionality, storying, and restoring ourselves comes first (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Graveline, 2004; Lather, 1991; Sinclair, 2003; Weber-Pillwax, 2001; Wilson, 2003). Where I come from you are either White, Metis or Native.

People know who I am. I am one of the daughters of Jennie (nee: Cryer) and David Absolon. When my mother married my father, she became dismembered and lost her Indian Status. My maternal Grandparents were Lizzie (nee: Pigeon) and Shannon Cryer from Shawmere Lake, Ontario – they were both Anishinaabe and are now in the Spirit world. Our ancestors lived and traveled up and down the Groundhog and Nat Rivers in Northern Ontario. My paternal grandparents were Kathleen (nee: Woodcock) and Jack Absolon and they had always lived in England. They too are in the Spirit world. My dad came to Canada at age twenty-one and met my mother at a dance in Winnipeg. They have been married for fifty years now. My blend is of both the Anishinaabe and English nations and I belong to Flying Post First Nation. Flying Post First Nation has a land base on the Groundhog and Nat Rivers. I am of the Marten Clan and am First Degree Midewiwin. I am also a close relation to the Bear Clan people.

I grew up at Cranberry Lake, Ontario which is a Canadian National Railway signal posting. Cranberry Lake is located between Sudbury and Parry Sound, Ontario. The passing trains used to make our living room lamps shake and our house rumble. Today, trains chugging along the tracks send off a sound that is comforting to me. I remember counting the boxcars as they rumbled past our house and often raised my arms, tilted at the elbow, with my hand in a fist gesturing for the train conductor to blow the horn. Hearing the horn evoked a big smile and wave and I'd run off feeling good that the conductor understood and responded. Cranberry Lake is in the bush; not in a town or a reserve. I was immersed among the trees, swamps, lakes, bulrushes, bears, snakes and wild flowers. My socialization was dominated with bush immersion and this immersion, as you will see, plays a central role in who I am and how I search for knowledge.

I went to elementary school in a small town called Britt, Ontario and then went to high school in Parry Sound. Making long commutes on the bus were a daily part of our reality. Then, there were no Indigenous teachers or curriculum at my schools. My own education was filled with racist representations of Indigenous people and I vividly remember shrinking in my chair at school while the teacher rambled on about how uncivilized Indians were. I remember being unfairly treated by teachers and in grade four was tossed across the classroom because another White girl said I stole her book. I wasn't asked, just tossed across the room. Needless to say, I hated school.

When I was small, I asked my mom what type of Indian we were. She said 'we are Ojibwa Indians'. And I asked her if that was good. She said 'Yes and that there were a lot of Ojibwa Indians here and that our nation was a big one'. I felt so good and proud to hear that and knew that I belonged to a strong nation, which made a difference to me. School never taught me that. The friends that I have are life long friends and they are people who have known me since elementary school. That is quite a privilege today. Most of my friends were other Anishinaabe girls and we hung out with one another at school. After school socializing was not an option for my siblings and me because the bus dropped us off at the highway and we returned to our home at the CN railway posting. Our after school play was to venture into the bush and build forts, tarzan swings and explore. I come from a humble place without malls, movie theatres, restaurants and commercial outlets. That solid bush kid who loves the land, lakes and trees is still within me in my very different context today.

When I need to find ways to balance the demands of contemporary stressors, like my doctoral studies, work and more complex life styles I return to the land. I am a trail runner, which means I run on trails where the earth touches my feet, the trees are visible and I can see

the water. Early one morning about half past eight, I was out for my run and wondering what the hell am I doing? What is the goal of the PhD? Am I getting lost? I was just going for my run, to feel the fear. Trepidation sets in from time to time and I need to run. What were my reasons for starting doctoral studies? I remembered that this dissertation is for my grandparents: Cocomish and Shaumish. Sometimes the reasons we end up doing what we do are simple, yet the journey is infinite without a beginning or an ending, just phases in between.

While working on this dissertation, on another day, I had an ache in my back. I was sitting at my computer searching for the right words, terms, and language. I want my words to reflect my way of thinking, being and doing and it's difficult at times to balance what I think I'm supposed to write with my sense of self. So I get knotted up inside. The other thing is, I rarely have physical health issues and when I do I'm a bit of a wimp because I don't like pain. On this day my back was sore and I had to try to find a way to relieve the aching. I asked my daanis (daughter) to walk on my back and put pressure on the aching knot. Being fourteen years old, she was only too happy to walk on me. That helped, but not enough. I have a massage wheel and put it on the floor and rolled my back against it, back and forth, back and forth - ahh. Again, a bit of relief, but insufficient. What was this ache about? I understand and appreciate the connection between mind, body and spirit. I am also a Reiki practitioner and have worked with energy for a number of years now and so a disjointed back was a symptom beyond the physical ailment. I began to connect my aching back with my own history and the reasons why this dissertation feels important. Yes there are bunched up knots in my personal and political history. Where do I go to unravel my aching back? I went to my knot and examined it and thought about the years of suppression of my cultural identity and traditions. The body ache is connected to other aches that are exposed through this dissertation. The aches and pains of being

dismembered as a people and being severed from our families of origin, as was the case in my family with residential schools and the reservation system, runs deep. I thought about my grandparents, their lives and what it was that they would have wanted us to know. I want my children to know something about being Anishinaabe. I want them to know about their Anishinaabe culture and I feel that is what my grandparents would have wanted us to pass on.

Shaumish (my grandfather) walked on the land searching for food. He walked on the land while talking to the spirits of the land. He saw the ancestors and acknowledged their presence in his life. He journeyed the rivers and lakes in Northern Ontario fishing and trapping and hunting. My Shaumish was a proud man who must have felt so angered and disempowered by the forced removal of his children to residential schools. It was my Shaumish, in my dreams, who ushered me to the doorway of our traditional lodge. It was he who told me, in a dream, to tune into my own journey with the Spirits. It was my Shaumish who showed me the path. He was a strong man in many regards, yet his life was disrespected and he was treated like an insignificant stupid Indian. What must he have thought or felt? I don't have the answers; I can only speculate what he must have gone through and my speculations probably don't do justice to his truth.

My grandmother, we called her Cocomish, worked hard and only took small breaks in her day. A trapper's wife works hard to keep wood chopped, the cabin warm with stew and dumplings on the old cooking stove. Silence was her friend and she would sit looking out her cabin window twiddling her thumbs, seemingly lost in her thoughts. She seemed so calm. Her energy was soothing, but her dark brown eyes reflected a pain that I will never completely comprehend. What must she have felt when her children were removed from her arms and sent to the Chapleau residential school? My mother told me that she remembers her mother and

father standing outside of the residential school gates. My mother was crying. She wanted to go with her mother and father, but wasn't allowed. Cocomish must have been in such anguish to have to leave her children there.

Our family's history exists in the knots of my stomach and back. There are different kinds of pain associated with these memories and experiences. When my grandparents returned to the spirit world, in my grief I knew that our loss would never be fully acknowledged or understood. Now, my Cocomish holds me when I feel lonely and uncertain in this world. She comes to me and cuddles me in her arms telling me that I am not alone. In doing so, she gives me love and support to continue on my path even though, at times, the path feels too difficult to continue on. Both Cocomish and Shaumish travel with me and have traveled with me during the most difficult journeys that I have taken. Their pain is also my pain.

I grew up in the bush, so in a literal sense there were no fences in my world. There were no neighbors' fences, or boundaries other than natural ones. My siblings and I wandered where we wanted and did what we wanted. There were no critical or judging gazes watching us except our parents. But they were out of sight most of the time, which meant that, in the bush, we grew up without 'shoulds' or 'codes of conduct', and without feelings of inferiority, condemnation or ridicule. Trees don't dictate how you should be; they just let you be. The same goes for the creeks, lakes, rocks and animals. Well, the animals want to be respected as does all of creation and so if you move around creation in a manner that demonstrates respect for other life forms, you will be okay. I grew up knowing that the spirits were all around me and when I walked through the trees and into the bush, I talked to the spirits of the trees, plants, creatures and I felt safe. I somehow knew that they would not hurt me and that if harm was coming my way the trees would protect me. Sometimes I would imagine a wolf creeping up on me and the trees

would swipe it away and scare it off and I wouldn't know a thing. I felt safeguarded by the trees and for this I was thankful to them.

No one really knew this side of me, the side that felt and related to creation so directly. I just did it and never talked about it, until recently. My conversations with the Creator were ongoing since childhood. And it was my immersion with the land that taught me to trust the life that the land had to offer. I knew that our life came from the land and that this was the knowledge that my grandparents and mother had. So ever since I can remember I've known that the land has educated and sustained our people. There has never been a time when I have forgotten my or my peoples' relationship to the land. My family knows that I love being on the land and have always made time for this.

There is a deepness and a richness in the land. She is our life giver. There is also a harshness to the land that means survival and life is not easy. Being Anishinaabe is about my connection to the spirits, the land and our life on this land. Cocomish and Shaumish knew about life on the land and held the knowledge that was both sacred and basic. That is how they survived and that is how our ancestors survived. Ensuring the survival of Indigenous knowledge goes beyond my meager work here and is encompassed in a collection of efforts.

My maternal grandparents are central to my doctoral research. Cocomish and Shaumish had the knowledge, the language, the traditions, and the life on the land. They knew about searching for knowledge and knew how to do it. Both were fluent Anishinaabe speakers and both had survived and lived in balance with the land. They had what many of us are now searching for and their life was disregarded and severed. I wondered why their presence in my life felt so strong. My doctorate research, I realized is a means to what they really want me to do: to join other Indigenous voices and carry our knowledge forward. Searching for information

and knowledge is not new to us. Indigenous knowledge should never have been eradicated, dismissed, omitted, exploited or abused. My grandparents want to see me continue to combat the forces that contributed to the losses in their lives and to help Anishinaabe people regain their rightful place within humanity. Acknowledging the source of my ache soothes it and I continue.

I stumble and feel like a novice within the academy doing academic work. However, I am not a novice to searching and learning. All my life I have been searching: for those cultural mirrors, for like-minded spirits, for kindness in the world, for a sense of belonging, for acceptance, and for knowledge. Oh how thirsty I was to learn about what happened to our people. It was like I was born into a time where the cyclone had hit and the people were still walking around in states of post trauma. No one could explain to me what happened. No one could connect the dots between my personal chaos and the political, institutional, and cultural attacks against Indigenous peoples in Canada. No one could explain because everyone was reeling from the colonial aftermath. It wasn't until I was in my early twenties that I began to meet other Anishinaabe people who were involved in our cultural ways. It was only then that I slowly started to see what it was that my grandparents would have wanted me to know. It was then that I started to realize the beauty of being Anishinaabe and the richness of our culture. Coupled with my relationship to the land and love for the Creator, being reintroduced to the Anishinaabe teachings and traditions made perfect sense. I started to feel normal within the Anishinaabe world and began to understand some pieces of the work I was to do in terms of joining the circle of people involved in the survival and continuance of our cultural ways.

Growing up immersed in the bush was a gift and because of that strong foundation I resisted being fenced into eurowestern ways of knowing, being and doing. I know what freedom really feels like and now want to tell my stories in my way, even if it means using my

authentically Anishinaabe English voice and grammar. I was raised by an Ojibway / Anishinaabe mother whose first language was Anishinaabemowin and who was forced to learn English. Anishinaabemowin is grammatically different than English. I speak from an Anishinaabe worldview, but in English. That is who I am. I write from a place, in a way that says I am Anishinaabe and I am also English. I now restore myself by re-storying myself into my doctoral journey on how we search for knowledge.

### *Decolonizing and Indigenizing My Research*

My own lived experiences as an Anishinaabe kwe and an Indigenous academic led me in this search. Experiences, thoughts and feelings about who I am are a result of cultural, political, social and spiritual effects in my life. I have been socialized in a dominant culture and in Anishinaabe culture, and have been thinking about decolonization for many years. Like Indigenous Australian scholar Lester Rigney (1999), my lived experiences enable me to “speak on the basis of these experiences and are powerful instruments by which to measure the equality and social justice of society” (p. 116). I have always identified as an Anishinaabe person and my first experiences with racism were because physically I am visibly Ojibwa with brown skin, dark eyes, and hair. I was treated poorly by teachers in my school and teased by White kids in the schoolyard. Those experiences were mainly felt and lived experiences without much reflection, analysis or critique. My spirit and heart always felt Anishinaabe, but my political and social awakening as an Anishinaabe person happened when I was about 24 years old. I began to be introduced to cultural teachings, gatherings and other Aboriginal cultural leaders and critical thinkers. It was through my conversations with Aboriginal leaders that I began to develop a historical, race, gendered and colonial consciousness about who I was and am as an Aboriginal

person. Additionally, the beauty of my culture in terms of its teachings and life philosophies led me on a healing journey out of internalized inferiority.

Like all the researchers recognized in this project the politics of decolonization is a necessary part of the journey. For me, this has involved rediscovering and nurturing my Anishinaabe spirit, healing my Anishinaabe heart, decolonizing my mind, and creating a critical action plan in my own life. Decolonization in my life includes: learning and practicing my culture; learning my language; speaking my language; fighting ethnocentrism in education, research and writing; battling institutional racism; and the list goes on. My point is that decolonization is about both knowing our cultural history and having a critical consciousness about our colonial history.

As a graduate student it is important and possible to tackle decolonization in Indigenous research methodology. The work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Smith, 1999) has inspired me to further study Aboriginal research and has provided a foundational basis for my work. Decolonization, to me, is not a simple task. Decolonizing is arduous work and full of contradictions. At a personal level decolonization has implied examining the inherent conflicts within myself; I am Anishinaabe and English. I am decolonizing in a colonial education system and am doing so in English, the colonizers' language. I seek to advance Indigenous knowledge systems in a mainstream education system. Doing a research project on Indigenous research methodology is an act of decolonization as I claim my own Aboriginality and Indigenous knowledge. For example I can now see that Indigenous research was taught to me a long time ago and those teachings occurred in the bush. The problem is that Indigenous students, like myself, experience frustration, anger, oppression and conflict within the academy when attempts to 'Indigenize' our research, methodologies and learning are met with antagonism and resistance

by those gatekeepers of colonizing forms of knowledge production. Indigenous methodologies are often not perceived as valid forms of knowledge production within western science, and therefore not taken seriously. This needs to change.

In the past I felt that research was a non-Aboriginal act and felt unsure and insecure about conducting research with other Indigenous peoples. I was fully aware of the damage researchers had done and wondered if I was perpetuating colonizing forms of knowledge and learning by doing research. Since completing my Masters degree in 1991, I have come to believe that research can be done congruently with who I am. This has meant trailblazing in areas where western research has not gone and discovering and recovering where other Indigenous researchers are finding their way.

During my Masters research my methodologies were grounded within Indigenous worldviews. It involved interviews with Elders and traditional teachers about Indigenous knowledge in social work practice. The academy did not have the knowledge set to contribute anything and my supervisor could only support and cheer me along. For example, in my Masters research the dream world guided my methodology and the research process became very intuitive. I followed cultural protocols as I conducted my interviews and withdrew from the standard pen and paper approach in my final report. My methods included use of photographs, oral testimony, and song. I created a video after synthesizing my interviews into a holistic representation of what was shared with me. I used the Medicine Wheel to conceptualize and organize my data. I created my own songs and chanted with my own drum, which became the background to my video. I narrated a photographic journey throughout the video. My narration represented what I had been told by the Elders and traditional teachers. Upon completion of my research project, the university's biggest dilemma was how to store my research. Prior to my

research project, no one in my faculty had ventured into media as a research methodology and most research projects were in written text and stored on microfiche.

With that experience behind me, I wondered how other Indigenous students employed Indigenous methodologies in the academy and what their experiences were. What methodologies do Indigenous researchers bring into their graduate research and how do they employ them in their research? What supports and barriers did they find and how have they managed to negotiate these? Addressing these questions could help substantiate our presence and the methodologies we bring into the academy.

Indigenous research is often guided by the knowledge found from within. Aboriginal epistemology (the ways of knowing our reality) honours our inner being as the place where Spirit lives, our dreams reside and where our heart beats. Aboriginal peoples have processes in place to tap into this inner space and to make the unknown – known (Ermine, 1995). This is a key Indigenous methodological principle (Rigney, 1999). Indigenous research methodology has been a process for me, whereby I make the invisible – visible. Colonization has attempted to make Aboriginal realities invisible and has tried to turn us into the disappearing race. Alongside the researchers here, I contest the notion that we are a vanquished race or that we are remnants of the past. This research and my work as a community helper has further convinced me that our role and responsibility rests in sustaining a valid, visible, and thriving existence for Aboriginal peoples in the present and future. My hope is that this research will contribute to establishing visibility and knowledge of Aboriginal methodologies in search for knowledge in the academy and in other contexts. This study of the methodologies and experiences of Indigenous graduate researchers will let other Indigenous readers know that there are many pathways to employing Indigenous methodologies within the academy.

Since the completion of my Masters research I have been able to talk about my graduate research with pride, while encouraging other Aboriginal researchers to take the road less traveled and be creative with their methodologies. As an Indigenous graduate researcher I have shared and collaborated with other Indigenous students the frustrations, fears and limitations of doing ‘Indigenist<sup>1</sup>’ research in the academy, yet I feel strongly this ought not be the case. Indigenous methodologies within the academy ought to be a valid methodological choice. In sharing the ways other Indigenous researchers actualize their ways of knowing, being and doing in their graduate research, I hope to ensure this.

Additionally, as a community practitioner I have coordinated community based research projects with a variety of First Nations communities. Although the context is different, these research projects began with similar methodologies while developing into processes with their own life. Each community in its distinctness ended up gaining knowledge in different ways. In keeping with Aboriginal principles, worldviews and values each community’s reality was respected and each community’s ownership over their research process was honored. As a community based researcher, I have witnessed the fear and suspicion Aboriginal people have about research, especially academic researchers. Also, I have seen community-based researchers embrace research as a community development tool once they learned about and saw the value of research for themselves. When First Nations create research methods that are in accordance with their own priorities, philosophies and traditions they are using Indigenous methodologies and research practices. Voyeurism, outsider interpretation, objectification of culture, and reductionist analysis were non-issues when the research was owned and controlled by respectful Aboriginal researchers.

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<sup>1</sup> Lester Rigney (Rigney, 1999) states that an Indigenist research methodology is anti-colonial research, which counters colonizing methods and emanates from an Indigenous worldview toward actualizing Indigenous ways of thinking, being and doing. Indigenist research embodies a philosophical Indigenous and anti-colonial stance.

I have journeyed with fear, ignorance, suspicion, and trepidation about research. I have also journeyed toward developing critical analysis, personal groundedness, and courage about research. After all, my main goal in my education and research is to empower, privilege and elevate Aboriginal knowledge, epistemologies, paradigms, philosophies, practices, and methods. We have for too long relied on the outsiders' interpretation of our reality. We have the knowledge and the methodological processes. My aim here is to explore these and articulate how they may be developed and honoured in mainstream academic contexts. My travels in the bush guide this journey.

### *Language and Terminology*

In this thesis I use both intellect and heart to understand and cleanse a painful and empowering history and reality. I have journeyed into text written by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal writers, both fiction and non-fiction, and academic and narrative. In work by Aboriginal authors I have found wisdom, understanding, comfort, solace and healing. I chose to write from a combined and intertwined place that acknowledges all aspects of my Aboriginality today. In my articulations, I sought more colorful ways to make the pages sing those songs which can invoke spirit and heart into our work. I tried to break the monotony of the written text by using voice, photography, poetry, stories, and visual aids. Using narrative, story, prose and slang, I include myself in the terminology and refer to Aboriginal people as "our" or "my" people. I do this to make my allegiances visible and myself accountable for my own writing. I want the reader to know that an Aboriginal woman, an Anishinaabe kwe is authoring this research and text. I want the reader to see a whole picture. I acknowledge that I am the artist painting myself in the picture. My voice is present and my experiences are not neutral.

My language and terminology warrants clarification. First and foremost I write as an Anishinaabe person. However, the scope of my research will go beyond Anishinaabe to include other Aboriginal nations within Canada. For variety, I use the terms Aboriginal and Indigenous interchangeably. Indigenous is frequently applied to a global context, but is also nationally applied. The term Aboriginal is the legally applied term in Canada and includes First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples. The term that feels most accurate is the term Anishinaabe. The word Anishinaabe roughly translates to mean 'the people'. I will also use the term Anishinaabek to refer to Aboriginal peoples because Anishinaabek is the plural form of the peoples.

The term 'research' has a lot of colonial baggage attached to it. In most Indigenous communities the term 'research' is a bad word (Smith, 1999). It conjures up suspicions and evokes distrust. As an Indigenous knowledge seeker I have struggled with the term 'research'. While writing this thesis I have been seeking to identify or create other terms that reflects Indigenous processes of knowledge seeking and knowledge production. I journeyed into my experiences and remembered, for example, that Indigenous peoples search for knowledge, food, and medicines. We gather berries, plants, herbs and we hunt moose, deer, geese, and ducks. We also trap rabbits, beavers and muskrats. We harvest food and medicines from the forest and earth and this knowledge has been developed, shared and passed down from generation to generation. Terms that reflect Indigenous ways of collecting and finding out things are searching, harvesting, picking, gathering, hunting and trapping. In the academy, these terms are transferable and within this dissertation I commonly use the word search and gather in lieu of research. I will also hyphenate re-search meaning to look again. In lieu of analysis, I use the term 'making meaning' to refer to the process of sorting the information that was gathered and harvested. Making meaning is what we do with knowledge.

Indigenous researchers are by definition Indigenous people who engage in searches for knowledge also known as research. Indigenous could mean Aboriginal, First Nations, Native, Indian, Inuit, or Métis. They are identified as such by their genealogy, nation, family and community. The term ‘conscious’ Indigenous scholars refers to those Indigenous searchers who are aware of our cultural and colonial history and who are on a path of intentionally learning, recovering and reclaiming their Indigeneity.

Indigenous re-search relates to the search process of inquiry and explanation with specific agendas, purposes, goals and objectives related to Indigenous realities. It is the process of how we come to know. To research is to look again. The focus, topic and questions surrounding the re-search are relative to Indigenous realities. The research is by nature related to Indigenous peoples’ contexts: historical, political, legal, economical, geographical, cultural, spiritual, environmental, and experiential. Indigenist research is anti-colonial, while promoting Indigenous knowledge and methods. I use the terms ‘methodology’ and ‘conscious’ Indigenous scholars consistently throughout this dissertation. ‘Methodologies’ refers to a series of methods that are used in the field of Indigenous searches for knowledge. ‘Methodologies’ address the how, who, where, what and when of Indigenous research. In this context methodology is pervasive and inclusive of a holistic process.

Indigenous research methodologies are those research methods, practices, and approaches that are guided by Indigenous paradigms, worldviews, principles, processes, and contexts. Indigenous methodologies are methods that are holistic, relational, interrelational and interdependent with Indigenous philosophies, beliefs and ways of life. The methods are determined by the epistemology, paradigm and ontology of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing (Smith, 2005).

I must also comment on what this dissertation is not. It is not a formula or prescription for Indigenous methodologies. This dissertation is not about Indigenous methodologies globally and must not be construed to be a general representation of all Indigenous methodologies. It is not exhaustive by any means. It does not address methodologies that are employed informally at the community level or within commissioned searches such as the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, although they would be searches worth undertaking. This dissertation focuses on Indigenous graduate researchers' implementation of Indigenous methodologies in academic research contexts. The aim is to validate and make Indigenous methodologies a solid methodological choice. Any shortcomings in the articulation of such methodologies are mine alone.

### ***Chapter Outlines***

This dissertation has two parts: Part one is the framework and contains Chapters one to three. Chapter one introduces my self in my research and deals with language and terminology. Chapter two is an overview of Indigenous research and begins with an examination of Indigenous peoples' cultural history and research. It presents a critical review of the colonizing role of research in relation to Indigenous peoples and of eurowestern research practices on Indigenous peoples. This chapter acknowledges allied research methods. It also presents Indigenous science and knowledge, which form the basis of this dissertation. Chapter three presents my methodological approach combining document reviews, conversations, learning circles, and literature and describes my protocols and processes as an Indigenous searcher. It also presents how I searched for Indigenous graduate research theses and Indigenous researchers and it presents how I begin to make meaning of the data.

Part Two presents my findings and contains chapters four through eleven. Chapter four introduces the graduate research theses I read and the Indigenous scholars I conversed with. Chapter five presents the petal flower metaphor I use to understand Indigenous worldviews and methodologies in graduate searches. The parts of the petal flower collectively represent the holistic nature of Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge. Each subsequent chapter in Part Two is directed to a particular part of the petal flower and combines all the information gathered and making meaning to describe specific elements of Indigenous research in the academy. Chapter six, the *roots*, grounds Indigenous methodologies in Indigenous paradigms, worldviews and principles. Chapter seven, the *centre flower*, recognizes *self* as central to the research process. In Chapter eight, the *leaves* represent the unique research *journey*. Chapter nine, the *stem*, is the backbone of resources and strengths, including a critical consciousness, that support Indigenous researchers in the academy. Chapter ten, the *petals*, highlights the diverse methodologies Indigenous searchers employ. Chapter eleven discusses the enviro-academic context of Indigenous researchers and features the experiences of graduate Indigenous researchers in the academy. Finally, chapter twelve presents concluding remarks with a summary, reflections, lessons, suggestions, and future directions.

## Chapter Two: Background to Indigenous Research

“...Miigwech Cocomish, miinwa Shaumish...  
Miigwech ndinendaaswin  
Miigwech b’saanibaamaadsiwin  
Miigwech Midewiwin...”

(K. Absolon, 2007)

### *Indigenous Peoples’ Cultural History and Research*

Aboriginal people have inherited from earlier ages a mission to explore and seek metaphysical knowledge. We know that this quest for knowledge took place along various avenues. Mythology, ritual, and ceremonies, the medicine wheel, nature, and language all reveal vestiges of grand discoveries and communion with the universe within...mamatowisowin is the capacity to connect to the life force that makes anything and everything possible. (Ermine, 1995, p. 110)

As Indigenous people, we are often negotiating the sensitive area of research both as researched and researcher. While Indigenous peoples are the most studied ethnic group in the world (Rigney, 1999; Smith, 1999), the study of the “other” has not been our tradition. In Aboriginal culture “one does not tell or inquire about matters that do not directly concern one” (Allen, 1998, p. 56). Devon Mihesuah explains:

While non-Indian historians and some Indians have made careers out of speaking for tribes and interpreting culture besides the one to which they belong, many Indians will not write about tribes other than their own, even if they have insights into those cultures. When it comes to speculating on Others’ motivations and world-views, many Indians are simply uncomfortable and won’t do it. (1998a, p. 12)

We have a researching history of studying the earth, the animals, plants and those that we interact with and relate to. Traditionally, research has been conducted to seek, counsel and consult; to learn about medicines, plants and animals; to scout and scan the land; to educate and

pass on knowledge; and to inquire into cosmology. The seeking of knowledge was / is usually solution-focused and often had / has an underlying purpose of survival. Searching for knowledge was congruent with the principles, philosophies, customs, traditions, worldview and knowledge of a particular nation (Absolon & Willett, 2004; Battiste, 2000b; Battiste & Henderson, 2000a; Deloria, 1996). Today, Indigenous researchers are committed to rediscovering that congruency between worldview and methodology (Absolon & Willett, 2004; Alftred, 2005; Archibald, 1997; Sinclair, 2003; Wilson, 2001).

### *Oral Traditions and Narrative*

my culture has been labeled oral in terms of traditional practice by western scientists humanists ethnographers and other academic researchers yet oral does not go far in describing the sense of community facilitated through gestures eye contact being in good relation with audience participation breathing the same air walking the earth together be / com/ ing in the same weather the same wind rain calm snow sharing locale and to some extent context consensuality commensuality even being hungry and sad together sharing with ancestors and thenotyetborn with the plant nations the waters sky and earth sun and moon powers and spirits and beings of all the directions. (Cole, 2000, p. 53)

In keeping with my Anishinaabe culture, I begin by paying respect to the oral traditions and knowledge that I was raised with and will provide the principles that guide Aboriginal methodologies of searching. Deloria (1996) asserts oral tradition is the “non-western, tribal equivalent of science” (p. 36) where Indigenous experiences and knowledge are passed from generation to generation and where that knowledge explains the nature of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual worlds of the people. Indigenous authors today are asserting the legitimacy of beginning with our experiences and cultural orientations as integral to the resurgence of Indigenous knowledge (Cardinal, 2001; Deloria, 1996; Hampton, 1995b; Weber-

Pillwax, 2001). Oral cultures are still reliant on the environment and exist in relation to Creation. Vine Deloria Jr. (1996) supports the applications of oral traditions in my search for Indigenous knowledge when he emphasizes the importance of the scout as the one who goes and searches for food, the better trail to take, the best place to lodge, etc... The scout was revered and held in high regard by the tribe that s/he belonged to. He states "Indians know that human beings must participate in events, not isolate themselves from occurrences in the physical world. Indians thus obtain information from birds, animals, rivers, and mountains, which is inaccessible to modern science" (P. 40). Lewis Cardinal (2001) further explains that it is our experiences in the bush that best teach us about our relationship to the land and animals, and thus our relationship to our research ideas. He goes on to state:

Essentially, I am saying that Indigenous research methods and methodologies are as old as our ceremonies and our nations. They are with us and have always been with us. Our Indigenous cultures are rich with ways of gathering, discovering, and uncovering knowledge. They are as near as our dreams and as close as our relationships. (p. 182)

I return to the bush because, in retrospect, that is where my first teachings about searching began. The animals, the earth and creation are the original teachers of the Anishinaabek. As an Anishinaabe kwe, my search for knowledge and life began at home in the bush where I was taught to fish, hunt, trap and go berry picking. Searching is so intrinsic to living in the bush that we can use this knowledge in connecting our experiences and oral traditions to the development of our contemporary search for knowledge. The ethics of our search are instilled in the land and I agree with Peter Cole (2000) on Indigenous ethics when he states that we learned to give thanks, express our intentions, actions and feelings for what we needed and took from the earth. Indigenous ethics, are implied in life itself and exercised through the teachings. If we needed the bark from a tree, an offering with words expressing

thanks, intentions and actions would precede the taking. Thus, the origins of any feast, basket, lodge or canoe would have been honoured and a consciousness of its' spirit respected.

Negotiating the bush requires principles. In retrospect I realize there were principles and philosophies that guided my search for berries, streams, fiddleheads, mushrooms, or fish. In what follows, these will be identified in italics. *Preparation* was essential to a search: think about your route, wear the proper clothing, gather your tools, bring food and water, and plan for the unexpected. In our search for berries we *started with our own knowledge*. My mother would often know where to begin. Thus, in my search for principles of Indigenous methodologies, I begin with my own knowledge of searching in the bush. I was taught to *attune* to the land and what the animals are doing. *Warning* the creatures of my presence was a central philosophy that *respected* the animals. I learned to *watch* the animals and birds, particularly the bears. Bears love blueberries too. Walking the land and negotiating the elements of the bush called for another principle: *do not get lost*. I learnt this principle as a young child. I learnt to *identify landmarks* from which I could locate my position and from where I would retrace my steps. Sometimes I used markers along the way in the form of rocks, broken twigs, or flag tape. Trees, rivers, creeks and landscapes also were important in finding your way. These markers identified the path I had taken and would also guide me safely home. Markers were essential because after awhile the bush begins to look the same, no matter what direction you look in. You might think you know where you came from – and some very knowledgeable people do, such as my mother and grandparents; but I am not as skilled as they are and require physical markers to guide my path home. *Listening and walking carefully* were other principles central to my search. My eyes watched for animals, obstacles, and helped me to retain balance in my steps. I listened for animals to ensure that I wouldn't startle a bear. I used a stick to shake the lower juniper bushes

or bang on the rocks to warn snakes or other small creatures of my presence. In practicing these principles I learnt about *demonstrating respect* for the land and its inhabitants. In my search I might not find what I sought out for, but that did not mean giving up; it just meant I would need to try another day, thus I learned about *persevering*. I learned to walk through the bush *patiently*, knowing that my search would take time. Sometimes I would find an abundance of berries and would pick for hours reaping the gifts of creation. For that, I was always grateful: *gratitude* is another principle. On other occasions, I would find other medicines and foods. Sometimes, I would just find myself and would spend the day in the bush with creation. Always, searching in the bush was guided by principles and it felt good to come home with baskets full of berries and *a sense of connection*.

Indigenous cultural histories are rich and have been passed from one generation to the next since time immemorial. Our lived experiences are records of these histories. Cultural histories speak about the cosmology of the universe and our location in it. Such histories have been carried on from generation to generation via oral traditions of storytelling, ceremony, songs, teachings, ritual, and sharing. Each nation retained, recorded and recounted its own cultural histories. These histories were / are relevant and meaningful to the lives, culture and survival of each Indigenous nation. Intertwined in histories were methodologies from which purpose and meaning were actualized. The 'hows' to life's questions and quests were pivotal to seeking answers. These 'hows' are central to Aboriginal methodologies as Indigenous researchers claim and articulate what is Aboriginal in our research practices and processes. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains what this means for Indigenous peoples today:

Every issue has been approached by indigenous peoples with a view of *rewriting* and *rerighting* our position in history. Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the

events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying...Franz Fanon called for the indigenous intellectual and artist to create a new literature...to write, theorize and research as indigenous scholars. (pp. 28-29)

As Indigenous scholars, we are challenged to take back control and change the way research is conducted within our communities, peoples, and cultures. We are being given the task to write and re-right our own realities and truths. An acknowledgement of Indigenous research methods in communities and formal education and research contexts is pivotal to this task. If we intend to theorize and research as Indigenous scholars, then, we must begin to identify what that means and how that happens. Examining the assumptions and history of research while critiquing its effect and impact on Indigenous peoples provides a foundation from which Indigenous worldviews can be validated as credible theories that inform Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge.

### *A Critical Review of Western Research and Indigenous Peoples*

Unfortunately, the day of the philosopher in Western society has passed and no single group today serves the function of surveying the totality of knowledge and trying to bring it into a coherent and simple explanation, which can be made available to the rest of society. (Deloria, 1996, p. 37)

Among Indigenous peoples, research has an appalling reputation and “sadly, qualitative research, in many if not all of its forms (observation, participation, interviewing, ethnography), serves as a metaphor for colonial knowledge, power, and for truth” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 1). It was important for me to understand this history and how research as a colonial culprit impacted our lives. The following account of Indigenous peoples’ experience of colonizing research explains this and illustrates why Indigenous peoples must now control our own research agendas, processes and methods. Beginning with contact, today we continue to experience the

lasting effects and impacts of eurowestern research on Indigenous peoples. Robert Miles stated, “[t]ravellers’ accounts of their experiences were an increasingly significant source of representations from the 16th century because of the development of printing and the emergence of the book” (Miles, 1989 p. 20). The impact of these accounts was immediately experienced and when travel books became common and popular as means to entice Europeans to resettle colonies in the New World “[a] negative representation of the Other therefore served to define and legitimate what was considered to be the positive qualities of both author and reader” (Miles, 1989, p. 21). Lester Rigney states “[e]xplorers, medical practitioners, intellectuals, travelers, and voyeurs who observed from a distance have all played a role in the scientific scrutiny of Indigenous peoples” (1999, p. 109). The pages of travelers’ books represented Indigenous peoples as second-rate and mediocre to European settlers. The travelers and settlers were consequently instilled with fear and a false sense of superiority, which affected their perceptions and relations with Indigenous peoples. In the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries evolutionary thought, the social sciences, evolutionary anthropology, cultural anthropology, and ethnographic studies of Indigenous peoples as ‘other’ fed the colonial agenda. Research was done “from the perspective of the conqueror, who saw the life world of the primitive as a window to the prehistoric past” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 18). Darwinian notions of the “survival of the fittest” and evolutionary thought generally were used to rationalize and justify genocide, racism and the elimination of Indigenous people (Colorado & Collins, 1987; Deloria, 2002; Miles, 1989). Specifically, Pam Colorado and Don Collins (1987) state that

these scientific “proofs” continued to assert innate Indian inferiority and to justify complete confidence in the ultimate disappearance of the Indian. In fact, scientific racism marched hand in hand with expansionists who by the close of the 19th century, had exterminated more than 25 million Indian people! (p. 52)

Scientific research and writing positioned Aboriginal peoples as inferior, and underpinned tolerance for systematic oppression and legitimated dehumanizing policies and practices. Rigney states that “[r]acializing discourses of difference, like all discourses of difference, are located at significant sites of power. We were racialized in order to exert power over us” (1999, p. 112). Difference was attributed to physical characteristics as race entered into scientific inquiry, and this scientific racism (Berkhofer, 1979) continued to assert “innate Indian inferiority and to justify complete confidence in the ultimate disappearance of the Indian” (Colorado & Collins, 1987, p. 52). Methods of observation, note taking and interpretation were intertwined with perceptions of superiority, authority and control by European ideologies and had nothing to do with Aboriginal realities (Bishop, 1998b). “However, it was still non-Indian scientists deciding what parts of the Indian “voice” would be heard – until the 1960s,…” (Colorado & Collins, 1987, p. 55). Thus, the methodologies perpetuated colonial ideologies that further entrenched and justified racist policies and practices against Aboriginal peoples. Recordings and representations of Indigenous peoples were voyeuristic accounts of the ‘other’ embedded in the values, beliefs, attitudes and agendas of the colonists (Smith, 1999). The following quote describes the zest and zeal with which Indigenous peoples became objects of intrigue for study:

During the British colonization in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, newspapers used negative reports about Indians to sell newspapers. Eager novelists picked up their poisoned pens to embellish on any Indian resistance to intrigue readers with horrific atrocities. In the 1800’s ethnographers recorded notes, wrote articles, and drafted manuscripts describing Indians and their cultures. More ethnographers and anthropologists followed in the late 1800s in desperate efforts to study Native American cultures...Careless historians followed ethnographers and anthropologists as a part of the academic community that wrote imbalanced articles and books about American Indians. (Fixico, 1998, pp. 87-88)

Scientific explanations of Indigenous peoples in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s espoused the idea of culture to explain differences and became known as cultural anthropology.

Later sociocultural models moved toward external explanations and integrated historical, economic and political perspectives (Colorado & Collins, 1987). Research and the written text have historically propagated perceptions of superior intelligence and strength among Europeans (Gilchrist, 1997; Smith, 1999). Colonial fabrications about Indigenous peoples reflect more the representations of Whiteness in relation to 'other' than any real representation of Indigenous peoples (Berkhofer, 1979). The construction of images and imaginations is based not on truth, but on the colonizers' preferred image of what Indigenous peoples should be or look like (Deloria, 1998; hooks, 1992; Mihesuah, 1998b). Critiques of ethno-historical accounts of Aboriginal people deal less with Aboriginal people and more with the "self-image of the writers and how the Indian world should properly be constructed" (Deloria, 1998, p. 65). As Jean Fyre Graveline poetically states, "Research. Teaching. Writing. are Not Neutral. are Political Acts. this is how. We become Those People. Uncivilized. Vanishing. Disadvantaged. Dispossessed." (2004, p. 203). Curious observers and benevolent record keepers of history, thus became accomplices in a war to rid Canada of Indigenous peoples. The cultural elitism and ignorance of the vast majority of ethnographers and anthropologists shaped their research, which later left fertile ground for biased written material.

The agenda was clear-cut: The observer went to a foreign setting to study the culture, customs, and habits of another human group. Often this was a group that stood in the way of white settlers. Ethnographic reports of these groups were incorporated into colonizing strategies, ways of controlling the foreign, the deviant, or troublesome Other. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 2)

The colonizing role of research, from Indigenous scholars' perspectives, is well documented by Colorado and Collins (1987), Hampton (1995a; 1995b), Gilchrist (1997), Bishop (1998), Rigney (1999), Smith (1999), Battiste and Henderson (2000b), Cajete (1994; 2000), Sinclair (2003), and Absolon & Willett (2004). These scholars provide critiques of the

Eurocentric, hegemonic and artificial contexts in which Aboriginal people have been forced to exist. Shawn Wilson (2003) establishes the colonists' agenda for imperialistic control over the land and control over the resources and links the lack of development of Indigenous paradigms in research to this agenda. This played a major role in establishing and maintaining Indigenous people as the 'researched' and not the researcher. Critical Indigenous scholars, today, contend that Indigenous discourse must be understood in the contexts of racism and colonialism. For example, Lenore Stiffarm (1998) suggests that measuring Aboriginal knowledges against Western criteria is academic racism and colonialism. She writes:

Aboriginal knowledge was invalidated by Western ways of knowing. This unconscious, subconscious and conscious means of invalidating Aboriginal knowledge served to perpetrate a superior / inferior relationship around knowledge and how this knowledge is passed on. Systemic racism was clearly perpetrated in this way. (Stiffarm, 1998, p. xi)

The legacy of colonizing knowledge has created a disconnection of people from their traditional teachings, people, family, community, spiritual leaders, medicine people, land, and the list goes on. The oppressive silencing of Aboriginal knowledges has perpetrated oppression and threatens the ultimate extinction of cultures whose epistemologies, philosophies, worldviews, and theories have sustained both the earth and all its inhabitants for centuries.

In the context of imperialism and colonialism, Aboriginal people were and continue to be misrepresented in the process of propagating, maintaining and justifying control, domination and genocide (Churchill, 1992). "Since the written work is considered the "true medium" of historical accuracy, history was left to the discretion of the literate. Those with the ability and opportunity to write had their own agendas to promote" (Voyageur, 2000, p. 86). The images and representations created 'artificial contexts' for Aboriginal people (Henderson, 2000b). Racist and negative representations of Indigenous peoples have been propagated almost

exclusively and universally by Euro-Western positivist researchers. Their positivist representations have imprinted academics, policy makers, lawyers, judges, politicians, and other authority figures with images of what constitutes knowledge and what constitutes legitimate knowledge construction. All colonial constructions are now in question and must undergo a critical analysis as sources of the negative and destructive role of research on Aboriginal peoples (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Gilchrist, 1997; Smith, 1999).

*Representation and Images in Written Text: A Critical Encounter*

Such larger intellectual currents as the decline of religion, the rise of secularism and the scientific outlook, and changing moral and political ideology deeply influenced the evolving scientific image of the Indian. (Berkhofer, 1979, p. 33)

Academic research is generally documented in written text and representation affects methodology; representation and image are critical to my search because colonial agendas shaped how and why Indigenous peoples were represented.

Scientific discourse and its application to the human species took place in a context of an existing pattern of representation and inferiorisation which it incorporated and theorized by new criteria of secularized validity...the agenda for scientific investigation was shaped by a variety of additional interests and by a particular pattern of international economic and political relations. (Miles, 1989, p. 40)

Science thus reinforced the 'inferiorisation' of Indigenous peoples and 'superiorisation' of Europeans, along with representations of inclusion and exclusion. Vine Deloria Jr. states, and I agree: "There has never been an objective view of the Indian and there never will be" (Deloria, 1998, p. 66). Miles also states that "representations are always the product of historical legacy and active transformation in the light of prevailing circumstances, including the patterns of class relations" (1989, p. 40). Representations in research

transformed Indigenous peoples from human beings to savages in order to legitimate colonization and civilization agendas.

Indian peoples in Canada are still the only group governed by Federal legislation, The Indian Act. We must question and dismantle representations of us, because Indigenous peoples have a history where “a racist ideology was present and that the legislation was introduced in order to realize racist objectives” (Miles, 1989, p. 84). How Indigenous peoples were represented in research historically and today is a significant issue among Indigenous researchers in the academy.

Whether it reflects, refracts, or creates, an image is not reality; it cannot exist without someone to see or imagine it. When many imaginers commit their images to paper or film or videotape, over and over, year after year, those distorted images take on a semblance of reality that can convince readers or viewers that the image is truth. It is not. (Money, 1997, p. 363)

Mary Alice Money documents the variety of images that have been used to represent Aboriginal peoples on paper, film, video or television. The images have rarely been positive. Commonly we have seen images of Indigenous peoples portrayed as the cruel savage, noble savage, the mystic, the stoic, the warrior, the exotic, dead, or wounded. More than 30,000 manuscripts have been ‘researched’, written and published about Indigenous peoples in North America. More than 90 percent of the authors of this literature are non-Aboriginal people (Fixico, 1998). Aboriginal people have not been portrayed as human beings with a distinct worldview, life, or experiences. Gross misrepresentations of Indigenous peoples have perpetuated clichés, stereotypes, and dehumanizing perceptions among consumers of written text. Money has identified ‘seven stages of images’ that one could find in various media. Although, she refers to Native Americans, her work is also applicable to the Canadian context. I have added an element to Money’s analysis of

the images, by linking the predominance of specific images to particular time periods of colonial history and the ideology of race<sup>2</sup> (Berkhofer, 1979; Miles, 1989).

Mary Alice Money's research helped me to see how representation positioned Indigenous people throughout time. Robert F. Berkhofer and Robert Miles provided insights on the scientific image of Indigenous peoples and the history of the ideology of race. I draw on all this information in the list below in which I correlate Money's images with particular time periods and race ideology (identified in italics). The images, which are underlined, are also positioned in relation to a reader who is usually in a position of dominance (usually White European). For example "outside" means that the readers perceive the image outside of themselves and disconnect from it; "below" means the reader sees the image as subordinate or below them; "above" is a romanticized perception; and "beside" indicates a more equal perception. The positioning is identified in square brackets.

Image +  
*Times periods, colonization & ideology of race* +  
 [position relative to reader/viewer]:

1. The "other" / The faceless, alien, bloodthirsty savage / The enemy  
*1400's, 1500's – travelers accounts, manifest destiny & biblical philosophy & Christian cosmology: justification / rationalization for colonization & genocide*  
 [outside]
2. The "respected enemy"  
*1600's, 1700's – resistance to colonization, emergence of printing and travel books; scientific racism, Newtonian thought, enlightenment, social science research*  
 [outside]
3. Exotic object of anthropological study / Alien passion

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<sup>2</sup> The history of colonization of Indigenous peoples implies an ideology of race is present with a working agenda which fuels the perceived superiority of one race over another and implies a right to domination. I developed these correlations in an unpublished doctoral paper in 2001 / 2002.

*1700's – voyeurism, construction of images in sciences of evolutionary thought to justify genocide & destruction of races of people; writing justified Indian Act policy; observational anthropology*  
[outside]

4. The pitiable victim / The doomed victim / “Lo, the poor savage”  
*1800's, 1900's – Representations to justify civilization and christianizing of Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people imaged as being inferior; evolutionary anthropology*  
[below]
5. The mascot / The pet / The subservient inferior / The “good Indian”  
*1900's, 2000's – Chicago Blackhawks, Red Skins, Warriors; representations to justify increased social control & domination; cultural anthropology to sociocultural anthropology*  
[below]
6. The noble savage / The mystic / The wise old chief  
*late 1900's & 2000's – representations begin to reflect an elevated position of Aboriginal people and this change correlates to the Indian movements and Aboriginal activism; Boasian anthropology – researched as tribes and cultures – not the Indian, sociocultural anthropology – historical, political and economic factors*  
[above and outside]
7. A human being / Us / The same  
*1980's onward – still debatable, but who is representing who is changing. Aboriginal representations of self may contribute to this shift in perception; re-emergence of Native science & Indigenous methodologies*  
[beside] (Money, 1997, pp. 365-366) [additional information by Kathy Absolon, 2007]

Historically, a majority of the ethnographical or anthropological images and publications of Aboriginal peoples are positioned in ‘outside’ and / or ‘below’. The positioning of Indigenous people as inferior, ignorant, and savage further justified the civilizing, christianizing and colonizing policies and actions of governments and churches. Few images or representations position the reader in a ‘beside’ location. Not surprisingly, the images reflect the colonial agenda of domination, control and subjugation of Aboriginal peoples (Lischke & McNab, 2005). These racist representations have serious implications for Aboriginal peoples in research because

they have reinforced racist notions of the perceived inferiority of Indigenous peoples and research has been the both the means and the culprit (Francis, 1992). Research has perpetuated the ludicrous ideas that Indigenous peoples' worldviews are merely myth and entertaining stories (Churchill, 1992). Most of these representations are false, dehumanizing, and offensive. A further implication of these representations is the perception that Aboriginal people cannot conduct or create valid research methodologies and findings. Indigenous scholars have much work to do to counter and re-right the lies. Indigenous research and writing are tools of education and socialization and require a reconstruction and revolution of Indigenous representations and images. Representation is a central research issue as I am most concerned with the creation of methodologies, which accurately represent Aboriginal knowledges, voices, and experiences. Affirming Indigenous methodologies requires that all conscious Indigenous researchers counter negative and inaccurate representations generated by years of racist and biased research about Aboriginal peoples and our research ability.

### *Allied Critiques of Euro-Western Research Methods*

Non-indigenous critiques of scientific research methodology have come out from the margins where women and minority perspectives and voices have been silenced (Benston, 1989; Brown & Strega, 2005; Dei & Johal, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Fonow & Cook, 1991; Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Lather, 1991; Maina, 2003; Martinez & Stuart, 2003). The working methodology of western science has several fundamental premises upon which most western scientists agree. These are important to articulate because they are what critical researchers are resisting and critiquing. Margaret Benston (1989) summarizes the assumptions of western science:

1. There exists an “objective” material reality separate from and independent of an observer. This reality is orderly.
2. The material world is knowable through rational inquiry and this knowledge is independent of the individual characteristics of the observer.
3. Knowledge of the material world is gained through measurement of natural phenomena; measurement in a scientific sense consists of quantification, i.e., reduction to some form of mathematical description.
4. The goal of scientific understanding is the ability to predict and control natural phenomena. (This postulate often takes the form of equation between science and power.). (Benston, 1989, p. 64)

Further, western science has a reductionist worldview, in that what is being studied is seen separately or in isolation from its environment to be observed and measured.

Critical feminist theory states that one should try and distinguish when isolation and measurement is appropriate and when it is not. Isolating and measuring variables often occurs in absence of the “context” of social, political, historical, or cultural values and conclusions are drawn resulting in misrepresentation. Benston (1989) states that science does not deal with the integration of values or social factors and that “the idea of objectivity supports the actual use of science to gain control of and domination over a world viewed by those in power as being made up of manipulable objects – both human and non-human” (p. 69). Further, she states that western science is responsible for “the reduction of human beings to objects to be controlled and manipulated” (p. 71). In fact, power, objectivity, and reductionism within science are inextricably linked; “science is not simply about knowledge, but is intended to lead to power over the world...and the desire to achieve certain specific effects or products” (p. 72). Research on Indigenous peoples across the globe provides numerous examples of research that perpetuates the control, domination and dehumanization of Indigenous peoples. In western science, how researchers feel about their research “is not just irrelevant to a scientific approach but

must be rigorously excluded” (p. 67). As Benston concludes, “the claim that science is value-free, objective and purely rational is ideology and not reality” (p. 74). She distinguishes ‘pseudo objectivity’ which claims value free neutrality from ‘objectivity’ which acknowledges context and values in the search for a more accurate and contextualized knowledge of the world. The notions that research can be free of values and context are, in reality, false notions.

Feminist and critical race theorists’ critiques of traditional research methodologies have been invaluable in loosening the positivist grip on epistemology and methodology (Dankoski, 2000; hooks, 1990; Lather, 1991; Miheuah, 1998b; Rigney, 1999; Tang & Joiner, 2006). The boundaries of research have been broadened to include and address historical, social and political contexts, and race, ethnicity, gender, power, voice, and representations. Specifically, Mary Donakoski (2000) summarizes feminist critiques of positivist research to be:

1. that positivist research has historically been androcentric, sexist and omitted gender differences;
2. that male power and dominance in knowledge production be addressed; and
3. that the main tenets of positivism and the existence of an absolute truth be confronted and critiqued.

Dismantling positivist methodologies has forged trails where searches for knowledge can become less linear, sexist, patriarchal, racist and/or exclusive. Lillian Dyck, as a Cree Scientist says that allied perspectives are coming into university settings such as “... feminist science. This can include many things, but one very positive aspect is the recognition that sciences are done in a social context; that is, they are done by people and

should be done for people” (Dyck, 2001, p. 26). Because of these critiques, feminist liberatory methodologies offer support to conscious Indigenous researchers addressing issues of gender, social, political, power, voice, and seeking egalitarian processes in our methodologies. Lester Rigney (1999) identified several principles of the feminist research movement used to operationalize methodologies such as women as researchers and as subjects, using lived experiences, women defining their own research and incorporating womens ways of knowing, being and doing. Within the Indigenous research movement we too must consider strategies for liberatory research and draw on these and other examples.

Feminist, critical theory, and participatory action research perspectives offer some practical solutions in assisting researchers from the margins to counter hegemonic and positivist research practices (Maina, 2003; Reason & Bradbury, 2006; Rigney, 1999; Stringer, 1999). “At the core of the feminist critique of the various disciplines is the attempt to fashion intellectual tools that are freer from the distortions of present male scholarship and that allow us to seek the truth while we recognize our commitment” (Benston, 1989, p. 60). Authors like Sandra Kirby and Kate McKenna (1989) and Patti Lather (1991) have contributed critical voices to the issues of power, knowledge, and politics of research. They and other feminists advocate research as action oriented practice with emancipatory and liberatory goals. Well intentioned liberatory researchers are further challenged, by racial minorities to become self-reflexive of their own patterns of dominance. I needed to remain focused in my search and I agree with Cora Weber-Pillwax (2001) that discourses of post structuralism, post modernism, deconstruction are discourses that “... [create] a terminology and language that further alienates us from our own

thoughts, knowledge and ways of being” (Weber-Pillwax, 2001, p. 169). So, the only post I refer to is Flying Post First Nation, where I come from. I continued searching for allies.

Black feminist and anti-colonial critiques have been allies in addressing and questioning issues of racial dominance and socio-political oppression and have forced open the gates of liberatory, anti-oppressive, and action oriented research paradigms and methodologies. We owe a debt of gratitude to these scholars whose work included and accounted for the experiences of Indigenous peoples and other racial minorities (Hill Collins, 1991; hooks, 1981, 1992, 1994; Max, 2005; Potts & Brown, 2005; Smith, 1999). Patricia Hill Collins (1991) explored the sociological significance of the distinct experiences of black women in relation to their theoretical knowledge and understandings of identity, oppression and culture. bell hooks (1993) writings illustrate relationships between the personal and political and the experience of healing and self-recovery in a context of racial and gender oppression. hooks was influenced by the works of Paulo Freire (Freire, 1996) and has made formative contributions to the development of a critical analysis of dominance, oppression, politicization, and liberation based on colonialism, racism, and internalized oppression. Freire said that research ought to be with people, not on or about people. He also posited research as a tool of cultural action, which ought to include dialogue and dialect with one another as a process of regaining our humanity and toward transforming our realities (Freire, 1996). From these writings, I, as a critical conscious Indigenous scholar, gained tools and language to use in forging a pathway for the ongoing articulation of emancipatory Indigenist research whose theories and methodologies are in alliance with the concerns, needs, and issues of Indigenous peoples. More recently, Karen Max (2005) positions herself as an ally with Indigenous peoples through implementing an anti-colonial research methodology. Also, Karen Potts and Leslie Brown (2005), illuminate

strategies of anti-oppressive methodologies in their work as agents of social change. Both of these recent works contribute to the new possibilities opening up.

### *Indigenous Science and Western Science*

Indigenous knowledge is the property of those individuals, their communities and their Nations. It is inappropriate for outside researchers to document such knowledge for the sole purpose of thesis, dissertations and academic advancement. (Simpson, 1999, p. 7)

Undeniably, the waning of traditional science among Indigenous peoples was not voluntary or spontaneous. It was caused by the historic denial, degradation, and even destruction of “traditional Elders, keepers of knowledge [who] were deliberately murdered” (Colorado, 1988, p. 51). Sacred birch bark scrolls, knowledge bundles and ceremonial objects were confiscated, destroyed and outlawed. Replacing traditional science were belief systems based on western scientific thought, which “created the illusion that western science is THE Universal Truth with THE true methods. As a result, since the invasion of the Americas, the science that has studied Native life has been Western science” (Colorado, 1988, pp. 50-51). Truth was then explained within European paradigms. Pam Colorado, in her scholarship led Indigenous critiques of western science colonialism as “intellectual imperialism” and called for the strengthening of “traditional Native science and to block further penetration of traditional Native science by Western science” (Colorado, 1988, p. 50). In the 1960s the first generation of Indigenous scholars and activists in the academy applied sociocultural models of social science research using history as a methodological tool and addressing historical, economic, and political issues. The voice of Indigenous peoples was beginning to enter into the academy and Indigenous researchers and science began to re-emerge as western theoretical models were called into question. Whisperings in the wind carried forward notions that Indigenous peoples might have a

science of their own (Colorado & Collins, 1987). And so, along with feminist and critical scholars, Indigenous scholars criticized the limitations of western science and actively advanced methodologies which embraced our own historical, social, political, economic, spiritual, and cultural realities (Absolon & Willett, 2004; Bishop, 1998b; Colorado, 1988; Deloria, 1996; Duran & Duran, 2000; Fitznor, 1998, 2002a; Graveline, 1998, 2000; Kenny, 2000; Kovach, 2005; Little Bear, 2000; McPherson & Rabb, 2001, 2003; Thomas, 2005). Jefferson Faye, an Indigenous science educator, describes his experience teaching Native science to his students:

I have to speak the “captor’s language.” I offer students a history of Western science from a Cartesian view, talk about the separation of humankind and nature, discuss mechanistic models of the world and the death of the Earth (including the evolution of the engineering mentality), and describe what it is like to work at a software firm. We talk about Darwinism natural selection, Newtonian physics, Einsteinian relativity, and quantum mechanics...And when I have done all that, I drop the bomb on them: stepping into my own mukluks, I tell them that all these things they believe to be TRUE are culturally constructed, that the science they have been taught to revere is only one worldview, and that incontrovertibility of scientific proof is a fallacy. Then I tell them about Native sciences, about the living Earth, and about the prevalence of spirits everywhere. (Faye, 2001, p. 271)

Jefferson Faye, from an Indigenous perspective, confronts the notion of an absolute truth, asserting that truth is a construction of those in positions of power over knowledge, and makes a trail for Indigenous worldviews as another form of truth. He does not negate the existence of other models of explanation, but opens up science to include an Indigenous worldview.

Vine Deloria Jr. (1996), like Benston (1989) contends the problem with Western science is that it is too fragmented; scientists study and know everything about dragonflies, for example, and nothing about frogs. They do not look at the relationship between them. Western thought is linear, positivist, and normative. Research that is based in Western thought assumes that only the linear and direct causal relationships can be observed, measured, catalogued, categorized, and predicted and are of any significance. Euro-Western research is “wrapped around empirical

evidence and the 'burden of proof'" (RCAP, 1996, Vol 4, Ch 3, s. 1). Indigenous thought, on the other hand, is holistic, circular, and relational (Cole, 2002; Colorado, 1988; Ermine, 1995).

"Indigenous peoples have traditionally seen all life on the planet as so multidimensionally entwined that they have not been quick to distinguish the living from the non-living" (Kincheloe & Semali, 1999, p. 42). "All my relations" is a popular phrase we use to acknowledge our relationship with all things on the earth: plants, animals, earth, water, air, and other humans. As such, "the non-western forager lives in a world not of linear causal events but of constantly reforming, multi-dimensional, interacting cycles, where nothing is simply a cause or an effect, but all factors are influences impacting other elements of the system-as-a-whole" (RCAP, 1996, Vol 4, Ch 3, s. 1). Where in a Western worldview, knowledge exists outside of the self, and knowing for Indigenous people begins from within while being, living, and doing (Ermine, 1995).

In "What is an Indigenous research methodology?" Shawn Wilson (2001) provides an outstanding critique of dominant research paradigms in his presentation of Indigenous methodologies from Indigenous paradigms. Wilson's work arguably comes at a time characterized by Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) in the history of qualitative research as the triple crisis wherein researchers confront issues of representation, legitimation and praxis in the human disciplines; at a time that involves "a serious rethinking of such terms as validity, generalizability, and reliability..." (p. 19). Methodologies are being contested and Indigenous researchers are creating research communities to critique, retheorize, dialogue and develop Indigenist research methods (Smith, 2005). Specifically, Wilson (2001) focuses on how Indigenous epistemology and methodology interplay. Wilson's article was one

of the few Indigenous articles that concisely examined the terminology of paradigm. He characterized four aspects which make up a research paradigm:

1. ontology which is the belief in the nature of reality – your way of being and what you believe is real in the world;
2. epistemology which is how you think about that reality;
3. research methodology is how you are going to use your ways of thinking to gain knowledge; and
4. axiology which is a set of morals or set of ethics.

In another article, Wilson (2003) further identifies the development of Indigenous research paradigms on a continuum of four stages. The first finds Indigenous researchers working solely from a Western paradigm with few Indigenous people present in academia. The second and third move toward the development and integration between a Western and Indigenous paradigm, with the third illustrating a stronger Indigenous paradigm toward decolonization. The fourth is more recent where Indigenous researchers are illuminating their own worldview using Indigenous paradigms. As an Indigenous searcher, my focus is on these recent developments. Indigenous paradigms are increasingly receiving recognition and respect as Indigenous scholars research and teach from their own distinct stance. Indigenous paradigms enable Indigenous researchers to ‘talk back’ and assume control of our own search for knowledge (Calliou, 2001; Talbot, 2002). When we ‘Aboriginalize’ (Fitznor, 2002a) research, Indigenous worldviews and perspectives are affirmed (Cardinal, 2001; Simpson, 2001; Sinclair, 2003; E. Steinhauser, 2002). Thus, we create a springboard for asserting Indigenous epistemologies, principles and methodologies in Indigenous knowledge production. Creating space for and actualizing Indigenous paradigms is an essential underpinning of an Indigenous research agenda. Indigenous critiques are vital to

create space and clear the dead wood out of the forest for Indigenous paradigms and methodologies in research to emerge.

There is a fundamental difference between Indigenous and Euro-Western thought and the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) further illustrates the distinction between Indigenous and Western research:

The methods of [Western] science are essentially reductionist, that is to say, they seek to understand organisms or nature by studying the smallest or simplest manageable part or sub-system in essential isolation...Traditional knowledge seeks to comprehend such complexity by operating from a different epistemological basis. It eschews reductionism, placing little emphasis on studying small parts of the ecological system in isolation. (Vol 4, Ch 3, s. 1)

These epistemological differences between Euro-western and Indigenous worldviews imply a general limitation of applying Euro-western methods to Indigenous contexts. The study of Aboriginal cultural phenomena through a non-Aboriginal epistemological lens can only yield distorted findings. Lauri Gilchrist (1997), for example, states that the application of positivist methods based on control and manipulation produces data that is contrary to and works against Indigenous principles of self-determination. I agree when she warns that often no research mechanisms exist to caution Aboriginal community participants of biased research results since Aboriginal community participants are often not the ones controlling the research. Further I agree that, “[t]here is a need for the community to express and define their own needs...and to produce and implement culturally distinct theory and methods for solving problems which result from colonization” (Gilchrist, 1997, p. 77). Research should be controlled by the community: from the development of research agenda, through to data collection and analysis.

As western scientific research methodologies get taken to task and critiqued by Indigenous researchers and critical non-Indigenous researchers, what seems to have emerged are methodologies that are guided by emancipatory, liberatory, anti-colonial and anti-racist

principles and values. These, methodologies, such as action based research, participatory action research and community based strategies, have gained validity among critical Indigenous researchers. (Day, Blue, & Peake Raymond, Winter 1998; Nabigon, Hagey, Webster, & MacKay, 1998; Sinclair, 2003; St. Denis, 1992; Stringer, 1999; Voyageur, 2003). Community based research methodologies are being employed by Aboriginal researchers as they often fit with community goals such as capacity building, education, and community ownership (McPherson & Rabb, 2001, 2003; Menzies, 2004; Simpson, 2001; Sinclair, 2003; Smith, 1999; Talbot, 2002). Specifically, Raven Sinclair (2003) acknowledges the burgeoning new body of knowledge coming out of the Indigenous scholars movement to “explore the theoretical intersections of Indigenous ontology and epistemology with research methodologies in an attempt to create research that is useful for the people and respects Indigenous ways of knowing in research” (p. 120). These critiques are consistent with stage three of Shawn Wilson’s (2003) four stage model where in stage three, Indigenous research illustrates a stronger Indigenous paradigm toward decolonization. He writes that you can try to deconstruct or decolonize a western research methodology, but it is still a western paradigm, and inseparable from the originating paradigm. I see an important distinction here between having an Indigenous perspective within a western research paradigm and doing research methodologies within an Indigenous paradigm. Nevertheless, some qualitative research methodologies are compatible with Indigenous paradigms. For instance, methodologies such as talking circles can be akin to focus groups, story telling is related to personal narrative, and participatory action research as an empowering methodology facilitates Indigenous peoples ownership, control and access to the research process. Though, Russell Bishop (1998b) makes the important point that liberating, community based, empowerment or action research methods should not be necessary when the

research truly comes from within ones own cultural constituency. He makes his point in the following quotation:

researchers in Kaupapa Maori contexts are repositioned in such a way as to no longer need to seek to *give voice to others*, to *empower* others, to *emancipate* others, to refer to others as *subjugated voices*, but rather to listen to and participate with those traditionally “othered” as constructors of meanings of their own experiences and agents of knowledge...the researchers participate in a process that facilitates the development in people of a sense of themselves as agentic and of having an authoritative voice. This is not a result of the researcher “allowing” this to happen or “empowering” participants. It is the function of the cultural context within which the research participants position themselves, negotiate, and conduct the research. The cultural context positions the participants by constructing the story-lines, and with them the cultural metaphors and images, as well as the “thinking as usual,” the talk/language through which the research participants are constituted and researcher/researched relationships are organized. (1998b, p. 207)

He seems to be saying that when people create and define their own contexts, they also construct a process that belongs to them. They do not need to be ‘empowered’ to be ‘given voice’. The research is a product of their empowered action, not a way to empower them. It is the cultural context that makes the deep re-ordering of the researcher / researched relationship possible. In this re-ordering and repositioning, the people have control and become the authority over the process, and this has been my experience with community based research when it is owned and controlled by the community. Empowerment as a concept becomes redundant when the power already exists within the community and the research methodology simply acknowledges its existence. Further, Russell Bishop (1998) suggests that “the imposition of the researcher-determined positivist and neo-positivist evaluatory criteria, internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity” (p. 208) underlies the dismissive, controlling and marginalizing nature of quantitative research. Additionally, he argues that qualitative research methods “maintained a colonizing discourse of the “other” by seeking to hide the researcher / writer under a veil of neutrality or of objectivity, a situation where the interests, concerns, and

power of the researcher to determine the outcome of the research remain hidden in the text” (p. 208).

Luana Ross (2005), on the other hand, contends that “without qualitative research, we have investigations devoid of context, experience, humanity, and imagination; it is overly creative imagination that leads to concept building” (p. 60). Unanimously, Indigenous researchers critiques’ call for the inclusion of discourses of race, colonialism, history and culture into any Indigenous research agenda. Aboriginal researchers bear the weight of the history of research as appropriation, misrepresentation and even abuse. We, Aboriginal researchers must research with this heavy burden. The dilemma is both personal and political (Kenny, 2000).

Leanne Simpson (2001) points out that even though participatory action research is an alternative Western paradigm, it is a Western paradigm nonetheless. I agree in her assertion that Aboriginal peoples have our own Indigenous paradigms, but disagree with lumping participatory action research into western paradigms because it has roots in the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, “whose educational work emphasizes dialogue, informed action, educational activity based on the lived experiences of the participants, community enhancement and ‘consciencialization’” (Lopes, 2006, p. 217). Participatory action research though is criticized for not going far enough and Indigenous peoples have their own theories and paradigms to work from. We thus need to look at our own paradigms: ontologies, epistemologies, methodologies and axiologies as a starting point. Indigenous paradigms are fundamentally different, in that they are built on the:

fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all of creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is in relationship with all of creation. It is with the cosmos, it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge. (Wilson, 2001, pp. 176-177)

This is key to Indigenous knowledge which informs the holistic and relational nature of Indigenous methodologies. Indigenous thought and knowledge guides how we search for knowledge; they are reciprocal and interdependent.

Vine Deloria Jr. calls for corrective measures to be taken to eliminate scientific misconceptions about Indigenous peoples culture and past. Second, he says, there must be a way for Indigenous traditions to contribute to science so that Indigenous beliefs and traditions can be taken seriously as valid sources of knowledge. He says that:

changes involve a fundamental struggle over the question of authority, since even when Indian ideas are demonstrated to be correct there is the racist propensity to argue that the Indian understanding was just an ad hoc lucky guess – which is perilously close to what now passes for scientific knowledge. (1996, p. 60)

Like Deloria, Russell Bishop (1998b) asserts Indigenous knowledge and worldviews as necessary epistemological foundations for our search for knowledge when he says, “We know that there is a way of knowing that is different from that which was taught to those colonized into the Western way of thought. We know about a way that is born of time, connectedness, kinship, commitment, and participation” (p. 215). The critiques and assertions made by Indigenous researchers to replace, dismantle, deconstruct and expose the dominance of Euro-western knowledge and research methods can be / has been called ‘talking back’ (Calliou, 2001; Fitznor, 1998; Talbot, 2002). The call is being echoed across Indian country for Indigenous scholars to bring forward their own knowledge and methodologies. This call cannot be answered without unveiling the complications that internalized colonialism presents. The knowledge set that is required of an Indigenous scholar is comprised of not only a cultural and colonial analysis, but also a decolonizing and healing stance. Only when we fill our scholarly bundles with the

Indigenous tools and knowledge we need, will the journey home be less cluttered and the path clearer to walk.

### *Indigenous Knowledge*

Today there are increasing numbers of Indigenous researchers who dare to challenge and problematize Western research while asserting Indigenous knowledge in the Western research process (Graveline, 2000; Hermes, 1998). As such, “[t]he research suggests that Indigenous ontology and epistemology readily provide frameworks for research theory, methodology, and methods. They direct the researcher to the proper means for initiating and implementing research, as well as to the purpose of research” (Sinclair, 2003, p. 129). Indigenous research now is guided by a re-emergence and assertion of Indigenous knowledge.

Indigenous knowledge is as old as life. The depth and breadth of such knowledge you will see reflected by Indigenous researchers throughout this dissertation. Here, I pause to stress the significance and extent of Indigenous knowledge within Indigenous researchers’ consciousness. Indigenous knowledge is knowledge, which is holistically derived from spirit, heart, mind, and body. Indigenous forms of knowledge production accept intuitive knowledge, metaphysical and the unconscious realms as possible channels to attain knowing (Colorado, 1988; Deloria, 2002; Little Bear, 2000). Eurocentric research paradigms force us “to affirm alien values and to sacrifice Aboriginal world views and values for norms outside traditional cultural aims.”(Henderson, 2000b, p. 59). Sákéj Henderson discusses ‘Aboriginal restoration’ and identifies the new breed of Aboriginal scholars who are asserting the validity of Aboriginal knowledge and worldview. Not only do these scholars provide critiques of Eurocentrism and colonialism, and question Eurocentric biases, they assert Indigenous knowledge and worldviews.

Research and literature by Indigenous scholars is growing rapidly. These scholars include and to name only a few Marie Battiste, a Mi'kmaq educator; Leroy Littlebear, a Blackfoot scholar; Linda and Graham Smith, Maori educators; Patricia Montour-Angus, a Mohawk teacher; Gregory Cajete, a Tewa educator; Linda Hogan, A Chickasaw writer; Marlene Brant Castellano, a Mohawk educator; Roland Chrisjohn, a Haudenosaunee educator; Lenore Stiffarm, Nakota and Kainai educator from Montana; Lauri Gilchrist a Cree educator; Herb Nabigon, an Anishinaabe educator; James Dumont, an Anishinaabe traditional educator; Michael Hart, a Cree educator; Maggie Kovach, a Cree / Sautleaux researcher and educator; Leanne Simpson, an Anishinaabe scholar; Laara Fitznor, a Cree scholar and educator, Eileen Antone, an Onieda scholar and educator; and Judy Iseke Barnes, a Metis scholar and educator. Many of these scholars share common principles across the diversity of their nations regarding Indigenous knowledge and worldviews (Absolon, 1993; Allen, 1986; Battiste & Henderson, 2000b; Benton-Banai, 1988; Brant Castellano, 2000; Cajete, 2000; Colorado, 1988; Fitznor, 1998; Graveline, 2000; Gunn Allen, 1991; Hart, 2002; Henderson, 2000a; Holmes, 2000; Kovach, 2005; Martin, 2002; Nabigon, 2006; Thomas, 2005). It is a given, for instance, that Indigenous worldviews are holistic and relational. "Most Aboriginal worldviews and languages are formulated by experiencing an ecosystem" (Henderson, 2000a, p. 259). Indigenous worldviews teach people to see themselves humbly within a larger web or circle of life. Both feminine and masculine roles are acknowledged. The Earth is feminine and the Sun is masculine – both are necessary for life to exist. Mens' work and womens' work may be different, but both are interdependent and contribute to a healthy whole. Interrelationships and interdependence within this circle create a consciousness of our relationality in all of creation. Lillian Dyck stated that western science is well developed in the mental sphere of knowledge, but is underdeveloped in the spiritual and

emotional spheres (Dyck, 2001). Knowledge for Indigenous peoples exists in the heart and spirit too. Indigenous knowledge comes from ancestral teachings that are spiritual and sacred in origin (Ermine, 1995). It exists in our visions, dreams, ceremonies, songs, dances, and prayers. It is not knowledge that comes solely from books, but is lived, experiential, and enacted knowledge. It is cyclical and circular, and follows the natural laws of creation. Indigenous knowledge is earth centered with ecology-based philosophies derived out of respect for the harmony and balance within all living beings of creation. Indigenous knowledge occupies itself with the past, present and future. The past guides our present and in our present we must consider the generations to come. Indigenous knowledge lies in our stories and narratives and within our oral traditions. It exists in our relationships to one another and to all of creation. Indigenous knowledge exists in the animals, birds, land, plants, trees and creation. Relationships among family and kinship systems exist within human, spiritual, plant, and animal realms. Indigenous knowledge systems consider all directions of life: east, south, west, north, beneath, above, and ground levels. Life is considered sacred and all life forms are considered to have a spirit. We manifest this knowledge in our humility in offering thanks for life and in seeking life's direction.

Indigenous knowledge has enabled Indigenous nations to live in harmony and balance with the earth, without harm. Our ancestors have used their knowledge to respect the laws of creation, while subsisting on the land, since time immemorial. Thus, research that is derived from Indigenous knowledge would certainly entail methodologies that demonstrate respect and reverence within these understandings. Indigenous research is about being human and calls all humans to wake from the empires' trance and rejoin the web of life. Taking into consideration the significance of Indigenous knowledge, I contemplated my own methodologies of searching

and gathering and present them in the following chapter. Indigenous knowledge, as you will see, are foundational and woven throughout the methodologies shared by Indigenous researchers.

**Chapter Three:**  
**My Methodology:**  
**A Journey of Making Meaning**

***Preparing***

G-chi' manidoo, what is it that you ask of me?  
Chi-Miigwech for helping me on my search  
G-chi' Manidoo...Chi-miigwech for your direction  
...Chi-Miigwech for your guidance  
....Chi-Miigwech for granting us vision  
Aunind Anishinaabek keeyaubi manidookauziwuk!  
Zhiway miishnaun G-chi' manidoo... (K. Absolon, 2007)

***My search questions.***

Central questions:

1. What Indigenous methodologies are conscious Indigenous researchers employing in their graduate research within the academy?
2. What Aboriginal values, principles, knowledge guide Aboriginal research methodologies?
3. What makes Indigenous research distinctly Indigenous?
4. What are Indigenous researchers experiences in employing Indigenous methodologies within the academy?

***The purpose of my search.***

There are Indigenous ways of searching for knowledge. Indigenous researchers ought to have culturally congruent methodological choices in their graduate research. The purpose of my search was to identify what Indigenous methodologies graduate Indigenous researchers are using and how Indigenous researchers are employing those methodologies in search for knowledge within the academy. I want to provide other Indigenous researchers with methodological options

based in Indigenous worldviews and demonstrate what research methodologies and worldviews are being employed in graduate thesis research. I chose graduate thesis research because I had a hunch that Indigenous graduate theses would demonstrate the diverse and varied ways that Indigenous researchers are searching in the academy. Searching for these would enable me to reveal and empower Indigenous methodologies and worldviews within academic research contexts. Consequently, I present a general overview of what informs Indigenous methodologies, experiences of navigating the academy, research journeys, central tendencies and diverse methodologies. I also identify the researchers' experiences of how they've done their research and their understandings of Indigenous methodologies. My overall goal is to document and validate Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge within the academy. My hope is that my dissertation will benefit Indigenous researchers and support their use of Indigenous methodologies within the academy.

### *Searching*

“Creator help me to search and walk with respect  
 Help me to listen with an open mind  
 And to see with an open heart  
 Help me to recognize the leadership and wisdom of those before me  
 And to honour the knowledge of those today  
 Give me the landmarks so that I can remember my own path  
 And help me to not get lost on this search  
 And to gather with humility and integrity  
 Miigwech Creator for your guidance”

(K. Absolon, 2007)

### *How I searched and what I did.*

Grounded theory provided a beginning and appropriate research process for this study, since it is not concerned with the verification of existing theories but rather in theory development (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The paradox of working within the academy dominated

by Western ways of knowing to validate Indigenous methodologies required searching for congruency in my own methodology and staying grounded within myself. I used inductive reasoning to determine the meaning emerging from the data rather than relating it to pre-existing hypotheses (Janesick, 2003). My gathering process was both eclectic and flexible. A triangulated multi-method approach best suited the holism of Indigenous culture (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Sinclair, 2003) and provided rich data. My search combined:

1. a review of selected graduate theses,
2. individual conversations, and
3. a group learning circle.

All of these were illuminated by reflection on my own experiences as an Aboriginal researcher in the academy. I brought to this task my own experiences as an Indigenous researcher, much prior reading and study. At the same time, the theses I read and researchers I spoke to contributed to my understanding of Indigenous methodologies. So this was a mutually enriching process of going back and forth between the literature and the data, each informing the other. The first element of my search involved identifying Indigenous graduate research projects and researchers within the academy, in Canada. Before selecting the theses and researchers, I had done a lot of work and reading on Indigenous knowledge and worldview in my life, teaching, research, and coursework. I came to the search with my own Indigenous knowledge and understandings. This was deepened and developed through my examination of theses and conversations with researchers. My understanding of Indigenous research within academic work comes from a synthesis of my experiences, the literature, and the data I collected.

All the theses are publicly available so the question of confidentiality does not arise with them. Everyone I had conversations with waived anonymity by providing consent for their

photo to be included. When I distributed conversation highlights for verification, editing and comments, anonymity was still waived. Indigenous searchers want to be acknowledged and accountable for their positions.

### ***Searching for Indigenous theses.***

I limited my library search to Indigenous research methodologies employed by Aboriginal graduate students in the fields of Indigenous Studies, Education and Social Work. I sought out completed theses from these three disciplines because I have existing national contacts in all three. I selected theses by Indigenous graduate students who integrated and asserted an Indigenous worldview and conducted research explicitly from who they are as Indigenous people. Existing relationships are appropriate channels for Indigenous inquiries (Hampton, 1995a; Marsden, 2005; Weenie, 1998). The graduate theses provided a parallel academic context to attain relevant data on Indigenous graduate research projects in terms of the research methodologies and student experiences in the academy. Additionally, I chose completed theses because they were accessible, available and their completion evidenced an acceptance within the academy, thus establishing precedence of the application and legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge and methodologies in graduate research. The theses were identified primarily through library searches, thesis portals at [www.thesiscanada.ca](http://www.thesiscanada.ca) and personal contacts.

Initially, my goal was to collect ten completed Aboriginal graduate research projects. I found eleven. I found four theses in Native Studies, Anthropology and/ or Sociology, five creative theses in Education, one in Health and one in Social Work. I was surprised to find only one in Social Work, and the one I found in Health was unanticipated. I collected all of the Indigenous research theses, copied them, and organized them into individual binders. They were ready to be reviewed in search for their methodologies. Although, I found three additional theses

that addressed Indigenous methodologies, I read them and discovered they were by non-Indigenous researchers. I have not included them as sources of data since my emphasis is on Indigenous scholars' work. Searching was time consuming. Tracking down some of the theses was easier than others, especially the ones available electronically. But some of the theses are on microfiche and had to be ordered, and printed one page at a time.

*Searching for conversations.*

My search also included in depth conversations with nine Aboriginal researchers whose methodologies are derived from Aboriginal worldviews about their graduate research within the academy. I use the term 'conversation' to denote an Indigenous way of meeting and sharing ideas with people, and I have also used the term interview to denote that it is me who is searching for knowledge. Discussions provided space for stories to be told without the pressure of an interview guide and allowed me to be more focused on listening versus questioning (Sinclair, 2003). The proposed sample size for the conversations was ten Aboriginal researchers. Once I had conversed with nine I found that I had acquired ample information. The main criteria for determining who I talked with were:

1. they were a graduate Indigenous researcher in the academy;
2. their graduate research reflected Aboriginal methodologies; and
3. their current research practices strive toward employing Aboriginal methodologies.

I sought out some searchers whose theses I had already reviewed and used the moccasin telegraph or snowball sampling technique to identify additional potential participants within the overlapping Aboriginal academic and community networks. Most people I contacted personally, by phone, or email. I already knew all but two of them. Prior to the actual conversation, I told people informally about my dissertation and inquired whether we could have a conversation

about Indigenous methodologies. Thankfully, everyone accepted my invitation. All stated that they were interested in my topic and looking forward to sharing.

In coordinating the meetings, universal synchronicity must have been one of my helpers because all the conversations occurred in concert and without much effort, mainly in September and October 2005. I traveled to Winnipeg, Saskatoon, and Regina for all but one of the conversations which was a telephone conversation in April, 2006 with someone living in British Columbia. Talking on the telephone worked in this instance because I already knew and had an existing relationship with the person. The Spirit of those I met and the Spirit of reciprocity was honored by following Anishinaabe protocols.

In each conversational setting, I set up my audio recorder and positioned the microphone between us. We signed the consent forms and release forms for photographs, and I described my search process. I used the interview schedule (Appendix E) as a guideline, which created a conversational space for a more organic process to emerge. I didn't follow the interview schedule in a linear way, rather I allowed our conversations to flow organically and towards the end of our conversation, I perused the schedule to see whether we had missed talking about something I should address specifically. This format worked really well for people and the flow of the conversation was natural. I found that most of the people I met were prepared and very willing to share their experiences and knowledge. The conversations were rich, invigorating and thought provoking. Creating a good space for sharing involved finding familiar space (mostly chosen by those I met with) where we could share in comfort, and with minimal background interference. Receiving consent to take photographs would provide more context for their voice in my dissertation. People willingly waived confidentiality. They also consented to using their real names and one person wished to use her Anishinaabe name. No one in this dissertation is a

fabrication, their identities are real. Each conversation commenced with an offering of sema (tobacco) and a gift as a small acknowledgement for the sharing of knowledge, experience, and wisdom. I also gave each person notes of gratitude. In the case of the telephone conversation, I mailed sema, a note and a gift, and before our conversation I offered sema to the fire<sup>3</sup>. The process was very rich and when I completed all the conversations, their journeys had filled my basket. In the end, the people I met conveyed to me that they felt validated and inspired in their own searches by our conversation and were interested in my final report.

### *Making Meaning*

#### *Reading the landscape of the theses.*

Surprisingly, reading the dissertations was delightful. I originally procrastinated reading the theses. First of all, I thought they would be filled with academic jargon, be dry, and boring. I wasn't looking forward to the reading at all. But I wanted to see what the landscape looked like and I knew that the Indigenous searchers whose theses I had selected would have articulated how they came to know in the academy. Some theses I couldn't put down because they were so articulate, meaningful and relevant. Some theses were narratives filled with personal stories of the research journey. They helped me demystify my own doctoral search. It was as if I was being mentored and shown how to proceed with my search through the thesis projects. I felt an enormous sense of privilege to have the opportunity to delve into Indigenous graduate projects and begin to get a hawk's eye view of some of the methodologies employed.

All of the projects I gathered were extremely insightful and relevant. They all incorporated personal testimony of their experiences and motives for doing their research. They all wrote in humane ways, which I found to be very validating. One of my fears in beginning a

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<sup>3</sup> I have a fireplace in my home and made a fire. I then offered the tobacco to the fire and gave thanks for the knowledge I was about to receive.

Ph.D. was that my writing wouldn't be academic enough. That fear evaporated while reading the dissertations. The most amazing and captivating dissertations were written in very accessible and personal styles. The researcher wove him/herself into their project. I too want to write in a purposeful way so that other Indigenous researchers will be able to relate, want to read, and find some benefit in my dissertation. These Indigenous researchers did not write in academically distant ways, or try to elevate themselves by over employing rhetoric and jargon. Each dissertation was unique and taught me about Indigenous methodology. Reading them excited me and gave me hope that we are making legitimate space for Indigenous methodologies in academic research.

*Making meaning of the theses.*

After doing a preliminary read of all the theses I decided to create an analytic framework for methods content analysis (MCA) (see appendix H). For each thesis I created a MCA file that helped me to organize methodological themes, tendencies, challenges, supports and quotations. And as I read the theses a second time, I created a MCA file with the authors' name, thesis title and research topic. I reviewed each dissertation methodically, summarized main methodological tendencies and extracted direct quotes from each dissertation. This process took anywhere from one to two weeks per dissertation, depending on the depth with which the author articulated their methodological considerations and processes. In the MCA process I searched the theses for common tendencies. I made notes in the margins of the research projects and highlighted key themes and quotes. I inputted the selected quotes in the MCA file. I also made notes in the MCA file related to my reflections and questions about the theses. I wanted my MCA files to be as complete as possible and to provide a good summary of the methodological highlights within the research projects. These MCA files became the reference point.

I also created a grid analysis where I generated columns called principles, methodologies and ethics and articulated the key themes of what the authors did. This grid helped me see the commonalities and distinctions described. Again, I reread the dissertations while making notes in the grid analysis related to methodological principles, ethics and tendencies. Reflection on the methodological tendencies and overriding themes was a significant aspect of this process. There was so much information in some of the projects that, at times, I had to set them down and just reflect on them, which often led me to putting my running shoes on and heading to the lakeside trail. As I began to identify common tendencies, I selected quotes of the authors' voices for inclusion in the MCA files. I ended up creating eleven MCA files that I worked from in terms of identifying emergent themes, commonalities and distinctions of Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge. At this point, I already had huge amounts of data.

I pondered on what to do with all the information and how I was going to present it in a meaningful way without losing the context of the searcher. I wanted to maintain the authors' voices. The next part of the journey was a long one. From working with the data, I had developed a good sense of common methodological tendencies of all Indigenous searchers. These common tendencies become the main elements of the framework presented in this thesis. Overarching themes across all the dissertations such as worldview, location, critical consciousness, Indigenous knowledge, subjective involvement, motive and the role of Indigenous researchers clearly revealed themselves. Studying these theses further developed my understanding of Indigenous methodologies and helped me identify potential people to engage in conversation on this topic. I pursued conversations with people whom I knew were using Indigenous methodologies and whose research experiences might contribute to my search. Also, I knew these people were critically conscious about their own graduate research. The theses

findings also informed my conversations and the learning circle process: “Beyond the decision concerning initial collection of data, further collection cannot be planned in advance of the emerging theory” (Glaser and Strauss 1967: 47). The dissertations influenced the conversations I undertook with Indigenous searchers.

***Making meaning of the conversations.***

The conversations were fun. Making meaning of the conversations was more demanding. Making meaning of the conversations refers to analyzing them (Marsden, 2005). After each conversation, I returned to my computer to document conversational contexts and reflect on my process. Each conversation was audio recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Individual files were created for each conversation. After transcriptions were complete, I again listened to the tape while reading the transcription to ensure accuracy. Each transcript was then sent to the respective person for verification and corrections. Accompanying the hard copy of the transcript was a personal note from me expressing gratitude for sharing their knowledge, including my thoughts on the upcoming learning circle I was to facilitate. This stage of my search required more reflection and so I created another file for my insights. I recorded my thoughts, feelings, reactions and insights along the way in a journal. I also talked about what I was doing with my partner and other colleagues.

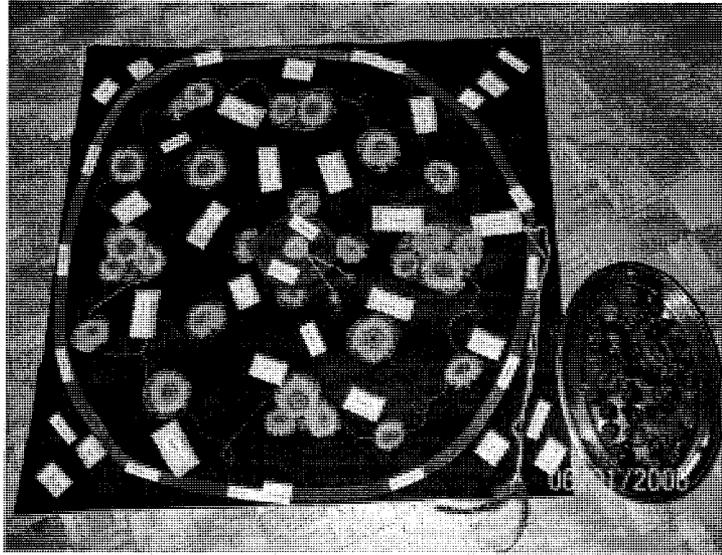
After transcribing the conversations, I listened to the audio recording of my conversations to take myself back to the setting and context. I catalogued the nine transcripts in a binder, reread each one and put them aside while I reflected on what they were saying and how I wanted to proceed. On a third reading of the transcripts I began making notes in a separate booklet. I needed to handwrite my notes as a means of stepping away from the computer to make meaning of the conversations. I color-coded sections of the transcripts to highlight their stories,

Indigenous methodologies, critiques of Western methodologies, my voice and my inquiries. My notebook became a companion to me and was a strong methodical process from which the gathering of voices emerged. In my notebook I recorded summaries of tendencies, challenges, resources, supports, essential elements, main messages and my voice. I doodled and made notes to myself. I crafted frameworks. I reviewed each transcript and recorded the challenges, obstacles and the methodological tendencies that each person shared. I drew my representations in my notebook. During this stage of making meaning, I did not use my computer. I felt the need to work with the information manually and in this way I had to embody what I was learning and experiencing and hand-writing enabled me to doodle, scribble, draw, write poetry and become creative. I could freely leave the boundaries of computerized linear text.

Prayer and dreaming were sources of support, guidance and direction during this phase of analysis and making meaning of the conversations. Making meaning was influenced by my dreams. During this phase I was preoccupied with how I would sort and more importantly, represent all the information gathered. I dreamt of a petal flower, which I will use in Part Two where I present my findings.

I felt thankful for such a bountiful harvest of knowledge and information. My basket was full. I needed to sort the berries and I prayed for guidance on how to proceed with representing the conversations. I then returned to the transcripts and my notes to identify tendencies common to all the conversations. During the sorting of information, I compiled a table summarizing each person's methodological tendencies. Interestingly, each person had a distinct take on Indigenous methodologies yet there were commonalities throughout. Maintenance of voice was a strong message and theme in the literature and in my conversations. I wanted to ensure that the voices of the researchers were present and visible.

I continued to feel the need to embody the process of working with all the knowledge and information I gathered. So one day, I stopped typing at my computer – got up and started working with textiles and tapestry. Eber Hampton (1995b), in his thesis process, identified his need to set his research aside and return to it to redo the analytic process. Stepping back for a while provided time and space to mentally, emotionally, spiritually and physically breathe, contemplate and reflect on the process. I needed to embody the knowledge that I was working with and do something physical and manual. I chose textiles because I can sew and bead and enjoy creating. While running on the trail one day I remembered my dream about the petal flowers. I had already sketched it out on a piece of bristol board and again in more detail in my notebook. From my dream I fashioned a tapestry representation (see Figure 1). I pulled out ribbons and assorted materials. After experimenting with a variety of designs I chose black cloth as a background, to represent space. I chose a red cord to create a large circle of Indigenous knowledge. The center is a red circle with a medicine wheel sewn in representing the center flower. Brilliant yellow sunflowers are sewn throughout the black cloth representing Indigenist methodologies in search for knowledge. The flowers are interconnected with green stems and leaves that are embroidered on. A bright red circle surrounds the sunflowers creating a circular and holistic framework.



**Figure 1. Tapestry of Indigenous methodology.**

In the center of the encompassed circle, sits a red circle with a deer hide medicine wheel, representing self and central tendencies. The red circle has a sunflower situated in the four directions of east, south, west and north, representing and reinforcing the holistic nature of Indigenous methodologies. All the sunflower appliquéés are accompanied with words identifying Indigenous methodological tendencies in search for knowledge. Making meaning not only involved working with the information, but employing methodological tools such as prayer, dreaming, visual arts and tapestry. Creating this tapestry was a journey into visualization, colour, connections, memory, and creativity. It took me on a journey from my head to my heart and spirit. It removed me from cerebral analysis and brought me to another level able to holistically conceptualize what I had gathered. In creating the tapestry, I thought about what I had learnt and what I needed to represent. I thought about my dreams and needed to honour them. I thought about the people whose work I read and who I conversed with. As I sewed and embroidered, I embodied my search in the tapestry. I didn't plan on it then, but the tapestry became the focal point of sharing in the learning circle.

*The learning circle as giving back.*

The learning circle (Hart, 1996; Nabigon et al., 1998) is a small group format where the process benefits those who participate in the exchange and sharing of ideas and experiences. I proposed a learning circle comprised of at least ten Aboriginal participants. The intention of the learning circle was to provide an opportunity for Aboriginal researchers to dialogue and share their research methodologies and the ways they bring their worldviews into their research within the academy. I expected that the learning circle would follow my review of the theses and conversations, but did not plan it, trusting that the process would emerge. At the end of each of the conversations I had with Indigenous researchers, I raised the possibility of a learning circle to collectively discuss Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge in the academy.

I submitted an unsuccessful grant proposal to hold the learning circle in Saskatchewan and fly in researchers from across Canada. This left me unsure of when or how the learning circle would occur. Again I prayed for direction and somehow knew the universe would provide and it did. I responded to a call for proposals for the Shawane Dagošiwini<sup>4</sup> Indigenous research conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The committee welcomed and accepted my proposal. This was another sign of universal synchronicity because the perfect venue to hold the learning circle on Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge was at an Indigenous research conference. I invited all the people I had conversations with to attend this session in Winnipeg. Three of the nine people were able to attend. Four said they would like to attend, but had other engagements and two others did not respond. At the conference, my session was open to other Indigenous researchers wanting to share about Indigenous methodologies and fourteen people participated.

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<sup>4</sup> Shawane Dagošiwini translates to mean being respectful, caring and passionate about Aboriginal research. This conference was an Indigenous research conference and was held from May 31 to June 2, 2006 in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Appendix G presents the Learning Circle Handout, which I circulated at the conference as an invitation to attend.

I arrived in my session room early and arranged the chairs in a circle and prepared strawberries as an offering to participants. In the center of the floor, I arranged the tapestry I had created earlier and had placed the strawberries nearby. As participants entered the room, I greeted them and handed them information and consent forms, and photo release forms. I also placed extra forms on empty chairs in case people arrived after I started.

The process of the learning circle followed Indigenous protocols. The chairs were positioned in a circle and we began with a welcome and round of introductions. After locating myself I provided background information to my search and explained the forms that were distributed. Participants were asked to sign the forms as an indication of their consent to participate and to include their photo in the thesis should I choose to use it. I abandoned the idea of using an interview schedule, but rather invited people to pose additional questions for group discussion regarding Indigenous methodologies. The goal of the learning circle was to facilitate a sharing about Indigenous methodologies that is deeper, richer and more inclusive. After gathering information from the theses and conversations, I knew that my basket was full and as a result decided to share what I was learning through my search, as a way of giving back and reciprocating the generosity that I had experienced. I decided not to videotape or record the learning circle because I wanted people to feel relaxed and the circle was about me giving back and not taking. I took photographs of the learning circle to provide a visual representation of the searchers to honor the oral and visual nature of Aboriginal culture. I also wanted to have the option of including photographs in my dissertation.

I shared the making of my tapestry and how it originated from the dream world. I presented the tapestry representation of Indigenous methodologies and the holism that they encompass. When I talked about the tapestry, I started by talking about the center, where the self and within self is where the spirit lives. From self I moved outward to acknowledge the circle where Indigenous worldviews and principles create the foundation for Indigenous methodologies. For example, I shared that truth is connected to yourself and when you weave yourself into your search you speak your truth. I talked about growing up in the bush and how we have always been a people who have gone on searches for knowledge, food, and survival. Searching is not a strange concept to Indigenous peoples. I told the story about not getting lost in the bush that is in Chapter two, section two and again in Chapter nine, section three: which I was later told was the most important point I made and many people in the circle nodded in agreement and seemed to identify with this story. I talked about the challenges of representation when the concept is holistic, dynamic, relational and interactive. The representation, I stated, is created on black cloth signifying space. It reflects that there is still a lot of space for the ongoing articulation of Indigenous methodologies.

As co-creators of knowledge, I invited the learning circle participants to make suggestions and provide direction in the articulation and representation of Aboriginal methodologies in search for knowledge. I invited people to share their ideas, comments, and thoughts on Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge. Mainly, the sharing within the circle validated the information that I had already gathered. This photo was taken in Winnipeg at the Learning Circle in June, 2006.



**Figure 2. Shawane Dagoiwini learning circle.**

As we talked and shared ideas, strawberries<sup>5</sup> were offered to each person in the circle. When the session concluded, many expressed their appreciation and gratitude for having the session. They said, talking about Indigenous methodologies was a validation and gave hope for their ongoing articulation. The learning circle was a small example of a need for Indigenous searchers to gather and share their experiences, challenges and accomplishments. Participants signed the release forms and handed them into me at the end of the session. As the strawberries were being offered, I gave thanks to each person for listening, sharing and attending this learning circle.

These theses, conversations and gatherings are processes within a larger continuum of conversations and work that is being done among Indigenous researchers. Those I had the privilege of learning from and speaking with are Indigenous researchers in the academy who are actively engaged in decolonization and liberation of Indigenous peoples. While in the academy, we all struggle to learn, grow, read, search and write from our own cultural, political, spiritual, and personal locations. Contributing to the collective good of Indigenous well-being and

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<sup>5</sup> Strawberries are offered as a giveaway to reciprocate all the knowledge and teachings I received from my search. Strawberries represent the good life that we are gifted with. Indigenous knowledge sustains Indigenous ways of life.

humanity seems to be a shared goal of Indigenous searchers. Indigenous researchers' presence in the academy is about political, institutional, academic, research and scholarship changes directed to address both the individual and collective good. The next part presents my findings.

## **Part Two: Findings**

### **Chapter Four:**

#### **Introduction to Researchers and Researcher**

I wish to honour Indigenous research and researchers by providing a glimpse into each of the fifteen theses and personal conversations, which are the sources of my information. I was searching for ways that Indigenous graduate researchers employed Indigenous based methodologies in their search for knowledge within the academy. I chose each of the theses and researchers based on their methodological underpinnings, their graduate academic research presence, and their leadership. All of the graduate theses achieved precedent setting recognition, of Indigenous worldviews and methodologies in research, in their respective academic institutions. Those I conversed with were identified because of their active engagement in Indigenous based graduate research in the academy. My work is not exhaustive, but it does profile significant tendencies and it does honor Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing in relation to research. Interestingly, in addition to the methodologies my work profiles the survival stories of those who chose academic channels of education and research and how they negotiated and survived their complex research journeys. I say survival because all of the dissertations I read were completed and defended, and many of those I spoke with had either completed their thesis or were in the throes of their doctoral research confident of completion. I am grateful to these scholars for their sharing and their contribution to the field of Indigenous research methodologies in search for knowledge. I first describe the six theses I read without conversing with their authors. I then describe the theses and conversations I had with five researchers and finally, the conversations with four researchers whose thesis I had not accessed. Quotations from

the conversations are identified in this thesis using their name accompanied by the transcription page and quotations from the theses are referenced using their last name, year, and page number.

**Theses Only:**

**Dr. Jo-ann Archibald, Dr. Peter Cole, Dr. Lauri Gilchrist, Dr. Dawn J. Hill (now Martin Hill), Dr. Leanne Simpson, and Dr. Winona Stevenson (now Wheeler)**

The following identifies six theses that I read and reviewed in search for Indigenous methodologies.

**Dr. Jo-ann Archibald:**

**“Coyote Learns to Make a Storybasket:  
The Place of First Nations Stories in Education”  
(Archibald, 1997)**

Dr. Archibald completed this doctoral dissertation at Simon Fraser University and works in Aboriginal education. Jo-ann Archibald is from the Sto:lo Nation, British Columbia and identifies as the River People of the Fraser Valley. I included Jo-ann’s dissertation because it speaks to the journey of learning through an emphasis on ‘cultural learning processes’. This thesis was a journey to learn about stories from the Elders. In the methodology she began with ethnography and then critical ethnography to deal with ethical issues in Indigenous research such as representation, power, authority, appropriation of voice and ownership of knowledge. She then decided to move toward more of a cultural learning process doing story research with the Elders. Jo-ann, through her dissertation, learned about the process of First Nations storytelling and worked with many Elders on her doctoral journey. The methodology employed is storytelling called ‘storywork’ and utilizes Indigenous principles to establish a Sto:lo and Coast Salish framework which become strands of the cedar basket, which is ultimately the framework

for storywork. Coyote, of course, symbolizes the lead that Coyote, the Trickster, often takes on journeys of learning lifes' lessons. Thus the research, like Coyote becomes transformative and Coyote is a figure that supports Jo-ann's research journey. For those of you who are interested in working with oral traditions, Jo-ann sets forth methodologies which honor oral traditions and stories.

**Dr. Peter Joseph Cole:**  
**“First Peoples Knowings as Legitimate Discourse in Education:**  
**Coming Home to the Village”**  
**(Cole, 2000)**

Dr. Cole completed his doctoral dissertation at the University of British Columbia in Education. Peter is of the N'Quat'qua Nation of British Columbia. I found this dissertation to be truly amazing. Peters' thesis shows that Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies have existed for millennia. He demonstrates this by making Indigenous knowledge central to the whole dissertation. For example, the means of transportation of the dissertation besides language is a canoe and Peter writes about the canoe journey as the vehicle for his search. His text is a combination of poetic, dramatic and storytelling voices – a rhetorical strategy to better reflect the orality of Peter's culture and other First Nations cultures. It's an anti-colonial 'isomorphing' of stories and epistemologies from Indigenous language into English and back again into an Indigenous English. Throughout, he interrogates, from an Indigenous standpoint the ethics of research, and problematizes Western academics claim to know 'other' cultures by means of Western methods of research. I think that if you are used to reading in a linear fashion than you might have difficulty comprehending and appreciating the structure of this dissertation. Once I opened my mind to what messages existed within the 'unstructured' text, I began to have insights about what Peter was writing about. This dissertation is an example of anti-colonial research.

He includes a letter from the dissertation publishers asking him to change his abstract so that it is understandable [to colonial audiences]. He concedes, but includes the memo as a reminder that colonial institutions continue to work at squeezing Indigenous discourses into their box.

**Dr. Lauri Gilchrist:**

**“Kapītipis ē-pimohteyahk:**

**Aboriginal Street Youth in Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Montreal”**

**(Gilchrist, 1995)**

Dr. Gilchrist completed this doctoral dissertation at the University of British Columbia in the Faculty of Education. Lauri is Cree from Flying Dust First Nation, Saskatchewan and speaks her Cree language fluently. I chose this dissertation because it is steeped in a critique, through the lens of an Indigenous scholar, of the ‘social science research industry’. These critiques are paramount as Indigenous scholars negotiate western academic curriculum and research methods. Through indepth case study she tells the stories and experiences of Aboriginal street youth and provides an in depth look at nine Aboriginal youth living on streets in major Canadian cities. Integrated into the stories of the youth are Lauri’s stories and reactions to what she discovers. This personal investment in our research is very evident in Indigenous peoples’ searches. The strength, I find, in this dissertation is its critical analysis and contextualization of Aboriginal youth within institutional racism, social marginalization and colonization. Lauri’s approach is inextricably linked to who we are, our lived experiences and the need to contribute to changing our location from object of study to active researchers. Because of colonial history and our struggles within colonized educational institutions, Lauri reminds Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars that an Indigenous methodology must examine colonialism in all its manifestations with a critical lens.

**Dr. Dawn J. Hill (now Dr. Dawn Martin Hill):**  
**“Lubicon Lake Nation: Spirit of Resistance”**  
**(Hill, 1995)**

Dr. Hill completed this dissertation at McMaster University in the Faculty of Native Studies. Dawn is from the Mohawk nation. Dawn’s inspiring dissertation is written with heart and for an Indigenous audience. This dissertation looks at Aboriginal perspectives’ influence on methodology and theoretical context within the academy. It explores the way Indigenous researchers, like Dawn, bring a new voice and perspective to research. It was very validating of my own research and methodological considerations. Dawn wrote about developing a context that is relevant to the Lubicon Lake Nation, herself, and the social sciences. She describes the field of research in Little Buffalo, Alberta over a five year time period and shares her experiences as a Mohawk woman working in Lubicon territory. Dawn identifies and articulates her methodology with great detail and her process as an Indigenous researcher is eloquently captured. She combines personal narrative with detailed storytelling. What is beautiful about this research process is that she provides the Lubicon Lake men and women an opportunity to tell their story in their way and through their own processes.

**Dr. Leanne Simpson:**  
**“The Construction of Traditional Ecological Knowledge:**  
**Issues, Implications and Insights”**  
**(Simpson, 1999)**

Dr. Simpson’s doctoral dissertation was completed at the University of Manitoba in the Department of Sociology. Leanne is Anishinaabe and Scottish ancestry and has grown up, like many of us, off reserve. Her Anishinaabe name is Petahsemoakae, Walking Towards Woman and she is a member of the mishibizhii (lion) clan. In her dissertation, Leanne used Anishinaabe

methods of inquiry, which is why I felt compelled to include it in my search. The goal of Leanne's dissertation was to examine the concept of traditional ecological knowledge from Aboriginal / non-Aboriginal perspectives using Anishinaabe methods of inquiry such as learning by doing, dreaming, ceremonies, story telling and self-knowledge. Again, one of the first things she does is self-locate and situate herself in relation to her research. She does the standard literature review with a focus on Indigenous voices highlighting that it is the Aboriginal peoples who have first hand knowledge of traditional ecological knowledge and Indigenous ways of searching for knowledge. The other thing Leanne acknowledges is that Indigenous peoples' voices are not often in 'mainstream' journals, but are more in Aboriginal magazines, newspapers, and articles written by Aboriginal authors. In these ways, Leanne's dissertation, is quite significant to Indigenous research methodology.

**Dr. Winona Stevenson (now Wheeler):**

**"Decolonizing Tribal Histories"**

**(Stevenson, 2000)**

Dr. Wheeler completed her doctoral dissertation with the University of California in the Department of Ethnic Studies. Winona is a Cree woman from Manitoba. She stated that she is a student of Cree history and struggles to balance Cree identity with Irish blood; urban and bush lifestyles; English and Cree language; written and oral cultures and being a Cree woman and an academic. She asserts that Indigenous intellectual traditions do not categorize and dissect knowledge the way that mainstream disciplines do. Indigenous intellectual traditions, in fact, provide the form and framework required for the development of Indigenous models and methods in research. Her dissertation research began when she was a land claims research apprentice and needed to collect stories of oral histories and traditions of the people of the land.

Winona, in her dissertation, openly discusses leaving her home and life to research and search and write about Cree history. Throughout, she positions Indigenous knowledge as a basis to develop Indigenous scholarship and methodologies. Like other conscious Indigenous scholars, she critiques colonialism and internalized colonialism. Further, she argues for a new articulation of Indigenous scholarship that is grounded in tribal intellectual traditions. The framework and foundation of this dissertation is based on nehiyawiwitawakans, Cree teachings, which come from many sources. Doing oral history the Cree way, Winona states, is as much about social relations as acquiring information. And her research project demonstrates that the dynamics of her methodology are steeped in Indigenous knowledge. Winona's dissertation is written in an accessible manner and beams with validation of Indigenous knowledge and methodology.

#### **Theses and Conversations:**

**Willie Ermine, Dr. Laara Fitznor / Missisak<sup>6</sup>, Dr. Michael Hart, Patricia McGuire / Kiskshekabayquek, and Dr. Dawn Marsden**

The following identifies five authors whose theses I reviewed and who I conversed with. I provide some details of the conversational contexts to share the diverse ways in which we meet, share and learn.

#### **Willie Ermine:**

**“A Critical Examination of the Ethics in Research Involving Indigenous Peoples”  
(Ermine, 2000)**

Willie completed this Masters thesis in the Faculty of Education at the University of Saskatchewan. Willie's research casts a critical gaze on research on and about Indigenous

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<sup>6</sup> I use both English names and Indigenous names to honour the whole persons' identity and use their English and Indigenous names interchangeable throughout.

peoples. He critiques applications of Western social science doctrines on Indigenous peoples. Further, he examines the ethics of Western research involving Indigenous peoples and uncovers the discursive strategies that impede Indigenous peoples' empowerment and the ethical issues around such scholarship. Willie writes about the possibility of configuring new models of research and knowledge production at the location where two worlds [Indigenous and non-Indigenous] intersect and create an overlapping space for innovative, cross-cultural and respectful modes of inquiry; a space he calls an 'ethical space'. The community context of Indigenous knowledge production is pivotal to ethical research involving Indigenous peoples. Willie strongly articulates the need for a critical examination of research on Indigenous peoples and asserts the need for Indigenous scholars to forge onward toward asserting critiques and Indigenous knowledge systems.

**Our conversational context:** Willie is from the Prince Albert area and was in Regina for a meeting. I had met Willie on several occasions at First Nations University of Canada. I contacted Willie through email and he agreed to meet with me. I met Willie at a conference site where he was doing a presentation. We couldn't find a space at the conference site, so we decided change locations and go to my office at First Nations University of Canada. We each drove our vehicles to my office. Before I began, I offered Willie *sema* and a small gift to give thanks for his sharing.

Our discussion was thought provoking and he validated what I already felt about working for and with the community. He affirmed the need to remain aware of where our knowledge goes when it enters the academy and to be critical of this process. He emphasized that we need to be careful what knowledge we bring into the academy, because our communities need our knowledge and without us in our communities, they are missing us. I wondered how my

communities back home were doing because he said that when you leave your communities to work in the academy, they miss you and suffer as a result. I left this meeting wanting to make sure that I am cautious about what I put in my dissertation so as to not create that 'super highway' to our traditional knowledge. I must attend to my process was another feeling I left with. Willie said that the processes I undergo are essential to my search for knowledge. Focus on my own process! I left the meeting feeling thankful to have such a stimulating and challenging discussion.

**Dr. Laara Fitznor / Missisak:  
“Aboriginal Educators’ Stories:  
Rekindling Aboriginal Worldviews”  
(Fitznor, 2002b)**

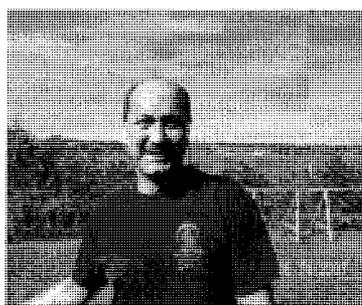
Dr. Fitznor completed her dissertation in the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. Laara is Naheyow ikswew – a Cree woman from Manitoba. In Laara’s dissertation she describes the meanings attached to the experiences of members of the Aboriginal Teachers Circle (ATC). The people in her study were all Aboriginal and were members of the ATC who worked in mainstream education systems in Winnipeg. This dissertation evidences the progression that some Indigenous researchers take when initially utilizing only western research methods and then move toward Aboriginal perspectives and paradigms in their research process. Laara’s dissertation searches for congruent methodologies, and asserts Indigenous worldview and methodologies. She problematizes eurowestern research hegemony and, in doing so, calls for Aboriginal researchers to look at our own issues using Indigenous methods and processes. This down to earth dissertation is written for the Indigenous audience. In my thesis I interchangeably use Laara’s English name and Cree name, Missisak.

**Our conversational context:** I traveled to Winnipeg to meet with Missisak at her home. Her English name is Laara, but I will acknowledge her Cree name and use that because it means horsefly and is significant to who she is. During our conversation I felt very comfortable and relaxed. We sat in her livingroom. The recorder mic was between us. Missisak talked about how she struggled with her research in terms of searching for methods that fit within her worldview. She is adamant about advancing Indigenous perspectives and methods in all areas of teaching and researching within the academy. Location is also significant to Missisak, as she spent a great deal of time sharing stories of her Cree names and their meanings. Missisak shares her knowledge through stories of her experiences and uses circle processes. The ‘Keemooch’ concept is a wonderful Cree word that embodies strategies of defiance, resistance, advancement and self-determination.

**Dr. Michael Hart:**

**“An Ethnographic Study of Sharing Circles as a Culturally Appropriate Approach With Aboriginal People”**

**(Hart, 1997)**



**Figure 3. Dr. Michael Hart.**

Michael completed this Masters thesis in the University of Manitoba, and recently successfully defended his doctoral thesis at the University of Manitoba as well. Michael is a Cree man from Northern Manitoba, and has a big heart in his work with Elders and with his

traditions. Michael studied sharing circles as a culturally appropriate method of practice at a time when Indigenous people were unsure what traditions were okay to research. His Masters thesis had two main goals. One was to outline the similarities and differences between particular social work approaches and an Aboriginal approach to helping. The other goal was to study sharing circles as a means to address the lack of culturally appropriate methods of practice when working with Aboriginal peoples. His research follows ethnographic research methodology – yet is strongly informed by his own Aboriginal perspective in terms of subjective voice, voice of the participants, protocols and ceremony surrounding his research. Michaels' important thesis evidences the changes that are occurring as Indigenous scholars forge pathways of research within the academy.

**Our conversational context:** I have known Michael for about 12 years in the field of Aboriginal social work. I traveled to Winnipeg to meet with him. Michael arrived around 8 p.m. and we were genuinely happy to see each other again. He was tired after having a very busy day with Elders and a sweat. I had food to offer – Sema and a small gift for his sharing. Michael was working on his doctoral research, when we spoke, interviewing Cree elders and Cree social workers who incorporate their own ways of helping, and identifying what knowledge is useful for social workers. During this meeting, Michael and I shared our experiences about doing our doctoral research and found similarities in our sharing. This was both validating and supportive. We each articulated our common experiences and could identify with aspects of each. For example, we talked about the push we receive from non-Indigenous academics to do our research in areas that they are interested, such as comparing their theories and practices to Indigenous ones. We talked about barriers we deal with and the double knowledge set we work with and our frustrations with the academy. Interweaving who we are into our research is a

strong theme. Our conversations continue and the learning doesn't really end. He hopes his thesis will be a start to a practice that's more reflective of Cree people and Indigenous people of Turtle Island.

**Patricia McGuire / Kiskshekabayquek:  
 "Worldviews in Transition:  
 The Changing Nature of the Lake Nipigon Anishinabek Metis"  
 (McGuire, 2003)**



**Figure 4. Dr. Patricia McGuire.**

Patricia completed this Masters thesis in the Department of Sociology at Lakehead University. Patricia is also known as Kiskshekabayquek, the woman who stands in the snow whirlwind. She is from Northwestern Ontario. Pats' Masters thesis is a narrative and portrays life teachings and stories of one Anishinaabek Metis Elder, her father. Patricia's research is based on a request that her father made of her in 1987 to finish his story for him, their family and community. The thesis has a developing framework that is based on lived experiences, values, ethics and community knowledge of the Anishinaabek Metis. She depicts her father's life stories through a culturally mediated framework from which the world is viewed. Patricia, in her thesis, first critiques eurowestern research frameworks and then develops a framework from an Anishinaabek worldview. Patricia's reliance and commitment to her worldview and the

Anishinaabe knowledge that guided her process provides a strong model from which Indigenous knowledge is derived.

**Our Conversational Context:** I met with Kishebabayquek at her home, in Saskatoon while she was on break between lectures at the University of Saskatchewan. We went right to work. I could tell that Kishebabayquek had read my material before hand because she went right into the topic that I was interested in talking to her about and I really didn't have to ask her too many questions. She seemed to have thought about this meeting already. I offered her sema and a gift and she offered me tea. It was good to have an opportunity to talk with Kishebabyquek as we are both Anishinaabe kwe (Ojibway women) from Ontario and I had met Kishebabayquek before at other venues. Our meeting was a welcome reconnecting of kin. Kishebabayquek is now working on her doctoral research with family, community and traditional knowledges.

In our conversation Kishebabayquek talked about her personal motives for doing the master's thesis she did and the role her dreams played in her process and when she was finished. She talked about her family obligations and how her research helped her to fulfill those obligations. Truth is assured when you weave yourself into the story because your family and community know your truth and you are responsible for your work and what you write, so writing yourself into your story addresses truth. Kishebabayquek spoke about the meaning of knowledge in Anishinaabe and its translation in English means to try to know as an active process. The time passed quickly and our conversation ended quickly when she had to return to class. In the thesis I use both Patricia's English and Anishinaabe name, Kishebabyquek.

**Dr. Dawn Marsden:**  
**“Indigenous Holistic Theory for Health:  
Enhancing Traditional-Based Indigenous Health Services in Vancouver”**  
**(Marsden, 2005)**



***Figure 5. Dr. Dawn Marsden.***

Dr. Marsden's completed doctoral dissertation is at the University of British Columbia. Dawn is Anishinaabe kwe from the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation. She completed her doctoral dissertation and sent me a copy of it when I learnt of her research journey through a mutual friend. Dawn's research project and the methodologies that she employed evidence an Indigenous worldview. Dawn writes about her research being grounded in the land; and about her methodology as 'getting grounded'. For her location is important and she first shares a story of her childhood name 'Hawk eye', and then addresses the relevance of her life to the research she is doing. Personal life history and lived experiences often form the basis of our research as Indigenous people and Dawn's dissertation clearly illustrates that relationship. After locating and situating herself within her research she critiques the history of medical science and medicine on Indigenous peoples. Central to her research is an assertion of Indigenous rights to traditional-based Indigenous health practices such as culturally appropriate health services and an assertion of Indigenous knowledge and methods within the research process. In her

dissertation, Dawn develops a Wampum Research Model which reflects Indigenous community, Indigenous self as researcher and academic consciousness.

**Our conversational context:** I have known Dawn for a long time now and only through a conversation with another Anishinaabe sister, was I informed that Dawn had recently finished her Ph.D. The moccasin telegraph is a strong phenomenon in Indian country. My friend, Cathy, told me that Dawn had used Indigenous methodologies in her thesis and hearing my excitement at Dawn's topic, agreed to connect us. So Dawn and I connected by email and phone and she agreed to have a telephone conversation about her search for knowledge. Dawn had also generously sent me a copy of her dissertation, which I included in my study. My conversation with Dawn spins off from her recently completed doctoral thesis.

In our conversation I asked Dawn about the Research Wampum Model which she articulated in her dissertation. She talked about having a dream, which laid out the Model as a guide to framing her research process and all the factors informing her process. She talked about the Indigenous community, the academy and herself as Indigenous researcher. Painting her research was an intriguing process as Dawn talked about her artwork. Throughout Dawn's search she positioned herself within her research. Dawn talked about Indigenous holistic theory and the role of spirit in research. A major catalyst of her research was her own process of "coming out" in terms of asserting Indigenous knowledge and methodologies. 'Damn that scientific rigor', was one of the critiques that Dawn said she was passionate about. Gifts were described in many forms. She spoke about losing her first draft in a theft of her computer, rewriting her thesis, and called that process a gift. My conversation with Dawn touched on many other issues of Indigenous methodologies such as translating Indigenous concepts and languages into English and the challenges and potholes inherent in that process. Finally, Dawn talked

about how her search facilitated remembering what she already knew and where she was from. I shared with her my thoughts on remembering too. Her search also became a process of “learning about self.” This conversation reminded me that much of what we do as Indigenous searchers relates back to the basic search for self and the context in which we belong.

### **Conversations Only:**

**Dr. Cam Willett / Wauzhusk, Dr. Eber Hampton, Dr. Maggie Kovach,  
and Dr. Raven Sinclair**

The following conversations with Indigenous researchers were based on their knowledge and experiences with Indigenous research methodologies. At the time of the conversations all but Dr. Hampton were in process of their doctoral research. Although, they have now successfully completed their doctoral research, their theses are not directly included, although they shared their methodologies and experiences of their doctoral research. Through our conversations we shared ideas, visions and ideals versus actualities of their written graduate work.

### **Dr. Cam Willett / Wauzhusk**

Cam received an Anishinaabe name in 2006, which is Wauzhusk. I use both his English and Anishinaabe name. Wauzhusk is Cree and Scottish from Little Pine First Nation in Saskatchewan. I presented Wauzhusk with tobacco and gave him a gift to reciprocate sharing his knowledge with me. Cam's Masters research was on persistence and retention of Aboriginal students in education. His recently completed doctoral research is also on Aboriginal student persistence in undergraduate programs. Wauzhusk talked about the challenges of letting go of Western methodologies and that our worldviews as Indigenous peoples are critical to an

Indigenous methodology. There are no prescriptive formulas to Indigenous methodologies. Rather, how we search becomes an interplay and an exchange in how we live our life. Our autobiographies are what we bring to our search, and therefore our location and personal connection is intertwined with our motive and purpose. Cam also talked about what we know just because we experience, observe, think, feel, participate and come to know because of our intuition, mind, heart and spirit realms. How we search, we agreed, is in how we fashion the relationships in our lives and comes from the relationships that we already have with our ancestors, family, community and many others. In the thesis I use both Cam's English name and the Anishinaabe name he was given, Wauzhusk.

#### **Dr. Eber Hampton**

I met Dr. Hampton in his office at the University of Regina. He has been in education in the Canadian context for the past 15 years and it was really good to have the opportunity to talk with him. Specifically, Dr. Hampton researches in Aboriginal education and has a keen interest in Indigenous research. Eber is the former President of First Nations University of Canada and is author of many articles on Aboriginal education and Indigenous knowledge. I offered him semá and we acknowledged the role of the spirit in our work. I was surprised because Eber came to our meeting with food. He brought me lunch. I set up the audio recorder and we ate while we talked. Talking with Eber was very comfortable. He often paused and talked thoughtfully during our discussion. He shared a few stories and was easy to laugh. He talked about the role of prayer in his work. He shared a prayer he said while doing his research that I really liked: "Help me so that I can be of help". I actually wrote that prayer down and stuck it on my desk. He reminded me to tell stories of my life, experiences, physical process and the aches and pains we go through in our journey. Eber emphasized 'audience' and who we write for and

encouraged us to write for the Indigenous audience. Motive and the purpose of our research were also central to what Eber shared. Eber talks more about tendencies and doesn't like to engage too much is absolutes.

**Dr. Maggie Kovach**



***Figure 6. Dr. Maggie Kovach.***

I met Maggie at her home in Regina in the morning. It was a beautiful day. I felt excited to meet with Maggie and this excitement was generated because I knew that we shared research interests and her dissertation was pretty similar to mine. When we spoke, Maggie was working on her doctoral studies at the University of Victoria but has since successfully defended her doctoral research. Her topic was Indigenous research methodologies and specifically a Cree / Saulteaux methodology. I presented Maggie with *sema* and a small gift. I expressed my gratitude that she took the time to share her ideas with me. Maggie's research is about hearing other people's stories about research and capturing her own journey that Indigenous ways of knowing took her on. Maggie is very thoughtful and analytic and is doing her dissertation on Indigenous research methodology. Our mutual and like minded interest in the topic led to a dynamic and validating discussion. She absolutely lit up and sparkled when she talked about how coming home was so much a necessary part of her research process – her entire energy shifted and lifted during her reflections of being home to do her research.

Maggie shared her process of coming home and the emergence of her journey as a major role in her methodological process. She talked with endearment of the open landscapes and big sky. She generously shared her dreams particularly a significant one of a pearl necklace. We talked about how creating space to be ourselves is essential for learning and searching. The space is where we can feel, think, and be with our truth. Our search for knowledge, Maggie said, is a portal or a doorway to self discovery and recovering our Indigeneity. These portals and doorways can lead us on journeys we never anticipated or help quench our thirst for answers, direction, history and knowledge. Maggie's voice is extensive in this thesis because she is currently working on her doctoral thesis with a similar scope to mine. It was difficult to capture her voice around a few central tendencies. She does assert that Indigenous methodologies must become a viable methodological choice for Indigenous researchers.

**Dr. Raven Sinclair**



***Figure 7. Dr. Raven Sinclair.***

Raven is a Cree educator, researcher and writer in Saskatchewan. She recently completed her doctoral studies at the University of Saskatchewan and is in the field of Social Work. Her doctoral research was focused on the experiences of Indigenous people who were transracially adopted. Ravens' Masters research was about how Indigenous researchers

operationalize their worldviews in their research. We have common colleagues, friends and acquaintances because of our social work backgrounds. Our connection is not new and our conversation is ongoing. I met Raven in Saskatoon. It was a pretty fall morning. We agreed to meet at Raven's home, but then decided to go to a meeting room at Ravens workplace. I followed Raven in my vehicle and on our way there we stopped and got ourselves coffee, tea and a snack. We chatted in the coffee shop and Raven asked if we should talk there, but the background noise while taping would interfere and so we proceeded to Raven's office. Raven in her car and me in mine – I followed her through the Saskatoon streets. The meeting room was sparse with a table, chair, window. It was kind of hollow sounding. Raven and I went to that room to facilitate the audio recording, for the quiet and private space it offered. Our conversation was relaxed and we laughed a lot while talking about issues we are both passionate about.

Raven started our conversation by talking about remembering her worldview and becoming reacculturated into Indigenous community connections after being transracially adopted and living in a predominantly White Westernized world. The absence of cultural mirrors made understanding her life transitions and life cycle difficult and only through receiving Indigenous teachings and having lots of experiences was she able to put her life into context for herself. Raven too searched for methodologies or elements of methodologies that could fit within her own work and it was only when she became exposed to Indigenous scholars and researchers that she began to understand what she needed to do. She talked about the impact we want to have, which relates to our purpose and motives for the types of research we do. Like many Indigenous scholars, Raven had to design her own course on Indigenous research methodology. She then pursued a Master's thesis asking other Indigenous researchers how they

operationalized or actualized their Indigenous knowledge and worldview in their research. Raven also shared her passion for her work and talked about her need to contribute her “voice to the increasing and growing discourse that is Indigenous, that articulates to the world that we always had a way of being in the world that was extremely intelligent, because we operated on certain principles that result in balance and harmony.” Like many Indigenous scholars, her passion is to contribute to the reassertion and remembering and recreation of an Indigenous discourse. Raven’s energy fired up when we started talking about issues of concreteness, objectivity and eclectic facets of Indigenous methodologies. This started a “myth busting” conversation. Like other Indigenous researchers, Raven is a myth buster! Raven sees her doctoral search as a process, a spiritual journey and uses her intuition, ceremony and prayer to stay attuned to the spirit and the heart, because that is where the process resides. We need to further consider addressing Indigenous methodologies within quantitative research and this is an area Raven addressed in terms of blood sampling, for example, and the Indigenous protocols and ethics necessary when research is conducted within a national scope.

These Indigenous scholars have become role models; their work has encouraged me along the corridors of my own PhD journey. I am ever so grateful for the work done by the Indigenous scholars who preceded me. I am honoured to join the circle of Indigenous researchers and hope that this thesis dually honours them.

## Chapter Five: Indigenous Worldviews and Methodologies in the Academy

### *Introduction*

“G’chi-manidoo ...where am I searching?  
I walk through academic corridors  
Searching for a route, a path, where is it?...  
I don’t recognize the landmarks...I jump through hoops ...  
I search for others ...where are they?  
ohh here are some relatives...I recognize them...  
I am not alone...Phewph!...  
I was worried...others have been here too...I am not lost  
Miigwech for helping me find the others  
Miigwech for the courage and scholarship of my relatives”

(K. Absolon, 2007)

My aim is to present the Indigenous methodologies Indigenous graduate students employ and their experiences of conducting Indigenous research in the academy. I do not compare or contrast the methodologies identified with eurowestern methodologies. Indigenous methodologies occur within a holistic framework and when isolated become methodologies out of context. Indigenous worldviews, paradigms and methodologies in search for knowledge, have until recently, been dismissed and disregarded. Indigenous scholarship articulating Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge has emerged in the academy in late 1980’s and early 1990’s. Pam Colorado’s (1988) groundbreaking research forged pathways for Indigenous research in the academic milieu. Prior to that time Indigenous scholars, within the hegemonic academy, were largely dominated by and limited to Euro-Western research theories and methods. We are in the dawn of identifying and using our own Indigenous knowledge, the epistemologies, paradigms, worldviews, practices, and principles in the academy.

Articulating the theoretical and methodological distinctness of Indigenous searching is a paradoxical challenge within the academy, because “academic disciplines and approaches to

scholarship are culturally biased and hegemonic in confrontation with Indigenous place-based knowledge” (Marker, 2004, p. 103). Certainly there are some allied theories and methods, but as Cora Weber-Pillwax (2001) argues, even the allied theories are eurowestern in their epistemological base. Willie Ermine, along with others in our conversations, points out the challenges of bringing Indigenous ways of knowing into a setting that hasn’t been kind or respectful to Indigenous peoples. I agree, yet I continue to believe that strengthening Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge within the academy is a valid project since Indigenous knowledge has governed Indigenous peoples’ survival on this land since time immemorial.

We must not accept anything less than full acceptance in the academy. We are not alternative. In 2003, an Indigenous researcher described her methods as “alternative information-gathering” (McGuire, 2003, p. 61). I wondered about that term, and concluded that when we describe our methodologies as “alternative”, we consent to being the ‘alternative’. Becoming ‘othered’ or ‘alternative’ depends on who is doing the labeling and framing. It is also dependent on the context of the research. If the methods are Indigenous, within an Indigenous context, and for Indigenous purposes, then it is normal and the mainstay of knowledge collection. In order for Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge to be fully validated they must be centrally positioned. The sooner the academy recognizes the existence and vitality of Indigenous methodologies, the closer the academy comes to creating a welcoming environments for Indigenous scholars who can then focus their energy on all areas of Indigenous knowledge production.

Published sources reveal that Indigenous worldviews and ancestral knowledge are being carried forward into our future (Battiste, 2000a, 2000b; Battiste & Henderson, 2000b; Brant

Castellano, 2000; Kovach, 2005; Thomas, 2005). The literature also reveals that this requires two simultaneous actions:

1. an assertion of Indigenous cultural knowledge and history; and
2. a critique and dismantling of colonizing research.

Out of these actions emerges a dialectic of knowledge, characterizing an Indigenous cultural discourse and an anti-colonial discourse. Both are necessary. Out of historical necessity, illustrating the intersection of colonization in our history becomes mandatory.

Today, there are more Indigenous searchers out there balancing Western and Indigenous ways in their research. I want to convey to other Indigenous scholars that you don't have to turn yourself inside out to do work that is of you and about you. Our own knowledge and methodologies are there and can be applied to the work we are doing in the academy. Indigenous researchers, in this dissertation are evidence of this. However, the cultural context for sacred knowledge production is different. Our teaching lodges and sacred medicine lodges belong in the community for our people and children and they are protected from the academy. It is not my intent to bring sacred knowledge methods into the academy. We have to acknowledge and be very careful about what we say or write about. There are sacred pathways that can't be scrutinized by the academy.

This chapter presents the harvest of my search within a framework of a petal flower. The petal flower and its components are holistic in nature. Each element is connected and interrelated to the whole of the flower and ought not to be interpreted in absence of its holistic context. The elements of Indigenous worldviews and methodologies are relational and interdependent.

*A Petal Flower*

I entered the dream world ...  
wandering and wondering...  
searching, hunting, looking...  
“use me” ... a small voice beckoned...

(K. Absolon, 2007)

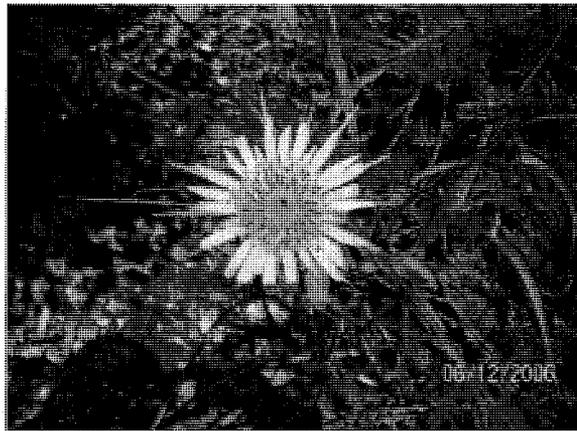


**Figure 8. Petal flowers.**

A petal flower is the framework I use for presenting the information I gathered about the Indigenous methodologies employed by Indigenous graduate researchers within the academy. The methodologies, ideas, concepts and issues that are discussed herein represent concrete, multi-layered, dynamic, multi-dimensional, and holistic ways of searching for knowledge. Prescriptions or formulas for Indigenous methodologies do not exist. Many people are curious about Indigenous knowledge and ceremonies, but I am certain that it is Indigenous people that need to reclaim that pathway first. I have been cautioned to write primarily for the Indigenous audience, which is where my commitment lies. My intention is not to create pathways to sacred knowledges, but to provide support and information from which Indigenous scholars will benefit.

When I was finished gathering from the theses and conversations, my basket was very full. I prayed for guidance on how I could make meaning and best represent all that I had learnt

about Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge. A gift of a dream was sent to me. I dreamt of a flower. It was not a specific flower and could have been any species of petal flower, which I believe best represents the open space Indigenous methodologies require. The dream was so vivid and clear that as soon as I awoke, I drew out the petal flower and identified its components in relation to Indigenous methodologies. Upon reflection, it was the components and not the species that was significant to my work. All elements of the petal flower are essential to crafting a holistic framework for Indigenous methodologies and identifying a specific type of flower is not as important for my work here. Roots represent worldviews, the center would be the self, the leaves are the journey, the stem is the backbone and the petals represent all the diverse methodologies I was learning about. Standing back from the drawing, I realized that my framework was congruent with an earth-centered worldview and the petal flower became the holistic representation of Indigenous methodologies.



***Figure 9. Wholistic representation: A petal flower.***

Flowers are Indigenous to the land and petal flowers are a natural part of the Earths' beauty. Although there are many petal flowers, the ones that come to mind are wild daisies, roses, strawberries and sunflowers. With that, I humbly borrow the petal flower as a metaphor to help summarize and create a framework for this harvest. The ecology and survival of the flower is

dependent, like humans, on its environment: the earth, sun, water, and air. It goes through various life cycles according to the seasons. Maintaining a balanced life and living in accordance with natural and spiritual laws ensure its' survival. Indigenous methodologies are similar, in that, they call for the recognition and understanding of the natural and spiritual laws that govern their existence and survival. The flower is rooted in the earth, yet is moved by the wind and rain. It is an exquisite example of how something can be so concrete, yet be flexible and fluid at the same time. Beauty is a gift the flower brings and its' scent can invoke reactions at the sensual, physical, emotional, mental, and physical levels. People have harvested and grown flowers for their medicinal, culinary, aromatic, and beautiful properties. They have healed hearts, wounds spirits, soothed minds, and built relationships. The gift of this dream comes fuller each time I reflect and think about the teachings embedded in the petal flowers.

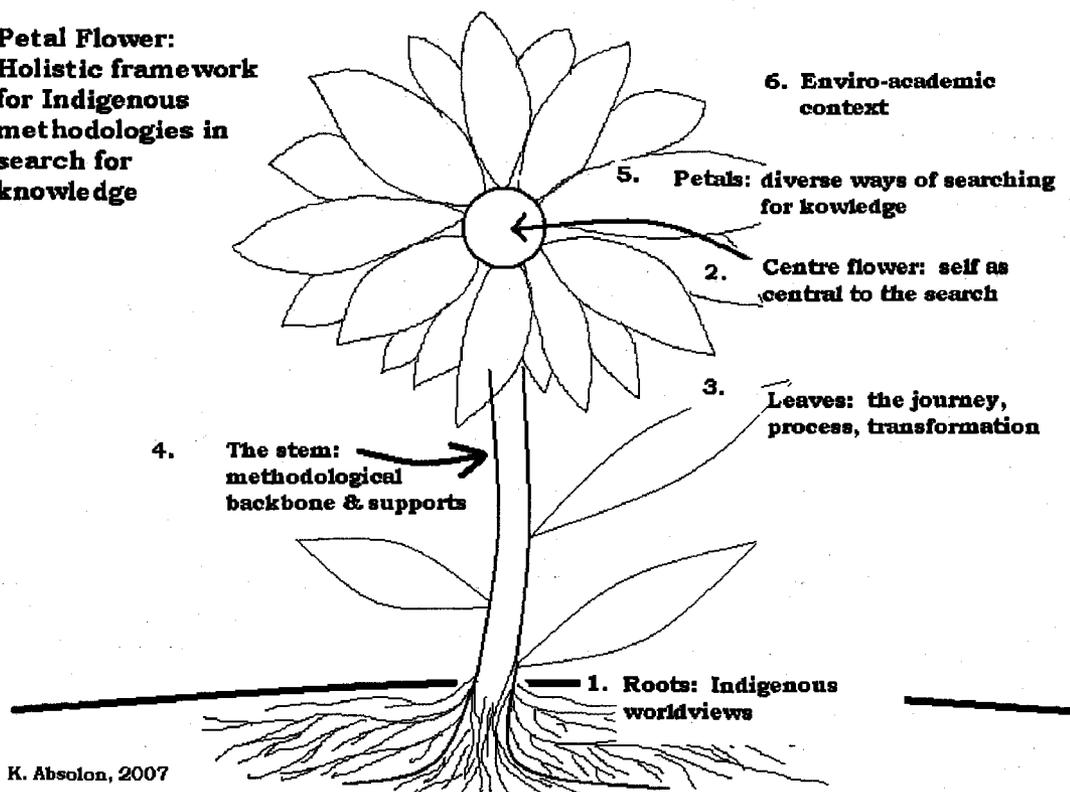
Similarly, Leroy Little Bear (2000) uses an analogy of four flower petals to symbolize strength, sharing, honesty and kindness in kinship relations. He states “the function of Aboriginal values is to maintain the relationships that hold creation together. If creation manifests itself in terms of cyclical patterns and repetitions, then the maintenance and renewal of those patterns is all-important” (Little Bear, 2000, p. 81). Like Leroy Little Bear, I bring in the petal flower to connect Indigenous researchers, Indigenous research and Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge in the academy with all of creation. In summary, the petal flower is significant in a number of ways:

1. all it's components are interrelated, and interdependent;
2. it is earth centered and harmoniously exists in relationship with creation;
3. it is cyclical and changes from season to season; and
4. and it has a spirit and life.

The petal flower framework is meant to acknowledge and validate Indigenous leadership and scholarship displayed within a climate that is often foreign, alienating and marginalizing.

I identified some common tendencies in all of the theses I examined and conversations I had with Indigenous researchers. It is these collectively identified tendencies that I present as parts of holistic Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge. I submit the petal flower as their framework integrated with common tendencies.

**Petal Flower:  
Holistic framework  
for Indigenous  
methodologies in  
search for  
knowledge**



*Figure 10.* Petal flower illustration.

1. grounding for Indigenous methods. Their existence is not as visible as the rest of flower, however the life and presence of the flower depends on the strength of its roots. All of the methodologies were rooted and informed in varying degrees by Indigenous paradigms and worldviews. Indigenous research is a search for congruency with ones own worldview.
2. The center of the flower represents self and self in relation to the research. Indigenous methodologies are just as much about who is doing the searching as the how of the search. It reflects the paradigms and worldviews of its' roots and its' health mirrors the ability of the whole to support it. The roots send core nutrients throughout the plant which enable ones Indigenous self in the search to flourish. 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 for Indigenous peoples. Indigenous research has meaning because of who we are as Indigenous peoples and our accountability and responsibility to our ancestors, family, community, creation, and the Creator. Self is central to Indigenous research methodologies as Indigenous researchers recalled memories, motives, personal responsibility and their search for congruency into their search process. Each researcher in this study located themselves in terms of nation, culture, land, historical and personal experiences.
3. The leaves enable photosynthesis of knowledge: transformative journeys. The leaves embody the journey of the self through the research process. Indigenous researchers are also on a journey of learning who they are and what they know. Indigenous research encompasses multiple journeys. The leaves are interdependent with the

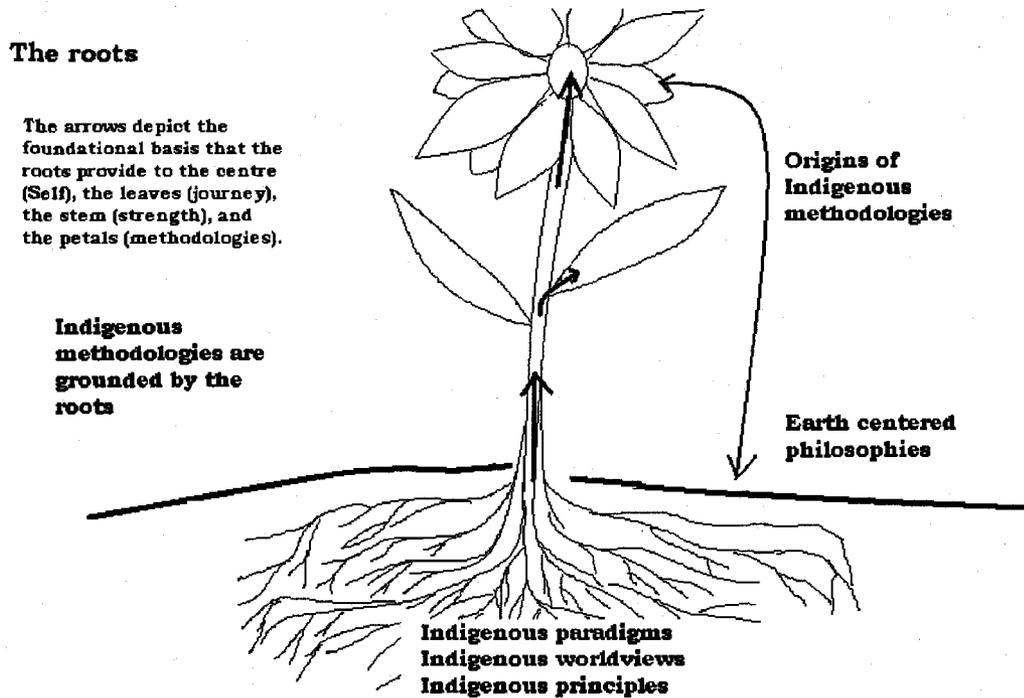
environment receiving its' nutrition from the sun and roots. The leaves are connected via the stem to the ways Indigenous searchers navigate academic channels.

4. The stem represents the methodological backbone and connector between all parts of the whole. The backbone of Indigenous research comprises a critique of colonialism, imperialism and of eurowestern research on Aboriginal peoples. A critical consciousness among Indigenous researchers expresses a commitment to 'rewriting and re-righting' our histories, experiences, and realities. The stem / critical consciousness is what holds it all together. It is the connecting pathway between the paradigms, researcher, process, academia and methodologies. Critical Indigenous research agendas are actualized because of the strengths, supports, skills and roles of Indigenous scholars.
5. The petals represent the diversity of Indigenous research methodologies. The methodologies that are operationalized and manifested are those that have been grounded in the roots and journeyed through the self, the research process, and the academy to a methodological research enactment. The diverse and varied methodologies then, in essence, become the sum of all its parts. For many Indigenous searchers, the "spirit" of and in our work was acknowledged by adhering to the relative protocols. The significance of Indigenous language, culture, and traditions and the personal challenges inherent in relearning and integrating our ways into our research.
6. Although not a part of the petal flower, the enviro-academic context influences the life of Indigenous methodologies in the academy and affects Indigenous researchers

who are trying to advance their theories and methods. It affects the degree to which Indigenous researchers feel able to remain congruent in their searches. In many cases, the environment can be intolerant, harsh, chilly and antagonistic toward Indigenous research and methodologies. A cross pollination of Indigenous paradigms and western paradigms can germinate unfamiliar species, which creates uncertainty and unfamiliarity. Indigenous researchers shared their experiences and strategies for employing Indigenous research in the academy.

All these aspects are inter-related and interdependent on one another. The roots, for example are aspects of the Self, are linked to the research journey, and determines our role as a searcher. There are principles of Indigenous methodologies that could also be discussed as being critically conscious or being diverse or seeing your search as a process. The various aspects of Indigenous methodologies are not exclusive of one another. They are presented here in separate sections in an attempt to organize and present them as clearly as possible. Each is connected to the whole petal flower which represents the essential holism of Indigenous worldview, knowledge and methodologies. The holistic nature of Indigenous methodologies is what distinguishes them. The whole package is necessary to understand each of its parts and their distinctness.

**Chapter Six:**  
**Roots:**  
**Paradigms, Worldviews and Principles**



Kathy Absolon, 2007

*Figure 11. Roots illustration.*

***Paradigms and Worldviews***

Essentially the roots provide grounding to the search. Indigenous methodologies in the academy are shaped by Indigenous paradigms, worldviews and principles.

what is of crucial importance is that reciprocity in indigenous research is not just a political understanding, never an individual act, nor a matter of refining and /or challenging the paradigms within which researchers work. It is the very worldview within which the researcher becomes immersed that holds the key to knowing. (Bishop, 1998b, p. 208)

The roots establish foundation and support the methodological process of searching and gathering. They are not necessarily visible, yet essential and become manifested in actions, behaviours, ethics, and methods. We cannot talk about Indigenous methodologies without acknowledging the worldview from where they come. In this chapter, I first discuss paradigms and worldviews followed by a discussion on principles. Paradigms are the set of beliefs and orders that influence research, methodology, data analysis, dissemination of results, and so on. This does not mean that the beliefs and rules are fixed or that one must adhere to seemingly correct methods, because paradigm shifts occur, particularly in relation to social research (Jupp, 2006). Indigenous paradigms are the roots of Indigenous methodologies in research. Dawn Hill asserts that Indigenous perspectives and paradigms enhance research validity and credibility while talking about her own doctoral research.

The main objective of this research is to establish the Lubicon's voice and spirit of resistance. I refuse to justify or reduce their experiences, to academic rhetoric or advocacy anthropology, to subjectivism or to dialogism. By using the Indigenous perspective, we can better comprehend the cultural richness, depth, and strength of the Lubicon people. (Hill, 1995, p. 13)<sup>7</sup>

In the academy, though, Indigenous paradigms are slowly making their presence known and awareness of their existence is occurring. This awareness and knowledge is creating paradigm shifts that change the way we perceive and conduct research in the academy. Shawn Wilson's assertion is relevant when he stated: "We now need to move beyond an 'Indigenous perspective in research' to researching from an Indigenous paradigm" (p. 175). What, I believe, he means is rather than adding Indigenous perspectives to eurowestern theories and methods, we need to ground our research frameworks and methods in Indigenous paradigms. This assertion is more pervasive than just adding perspective. It is a grounding stance.

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<sup>7</sup> Thesis quotes are cited by thesis author using APA style. Voices from my conversations are cited using first names followed by transcript page number.

Indigenous paradigms, worldviews and principles are also liberatory, emancipatory, and critical. For example, a critical Indigenous paradigm also factors in a historical, colonial and power analysis (Rigney, 1999). It infers that our emancipation as Indigenous people is not freely supported by the colonial state because it means a loss of colonial power and historically, this has never happened willingly. Michael Hart explains that currently, Indigenous paradigms combine a knowing of cultural history, colonial history and future aspirations.

Aboriginal science has its own preferential perspectives, goals, and processes to acquiring knowledge. In order to overcome the historical oppression of Aboriginal peoples in relation to research and to bring to the forefront Aboriginal knowledge, research approaches need to respect the worldviews of Aboriginal peoples. (Hart, 1997, p. 99)

The past, present, and future intersect and much of our research is about searching for truth, freedom, emancipation, and ultimately finding our way home. Finding our way home is a search to return to our own roots, dignity and humanity as the Creator originally intended. So one path many of us choose is emancipation through research and knowledge. Many of us understand that knowledge is power and our search for knowledge constitutes a search for power. Indigenous research is about being personal and political and responsible for creating change. All of the theses and conversations claimed a personal voice and stance about our searches. Patricia writes about the responsibility we have in representing our stories and that there is power in “being a researcher and in being a writer” (McGuire, 2003, p. 35), where issues of power and authority evoke a responsibility to family, community and ancestors for truthful representations of the stories and knowledge we gather. Winona (Stevenson, 2000) stated that we don’t need to study oppression because we already know oppression. We are already aware of difference, being ‘othered’, and with this awareness we weave our stories and identities into the research process to reclaim our power and knowledge.

Indigenous paradigms must reflect Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. Laara Fitznor, in her thesis, asserted Indigenous paradigms when she said:

We must follow the lead of Aboriginal and Indigenous scholars who dared to trouble Western paradigms and assert ours. That is what I am also attempting here. Therefore, the methodological approach used in this research is based on the need to give Aboriginal knowings and processes a voice by employing methodological frameworks that are mindful of our knowings. (Fitznor, 2002b, p. 65)

An Indigenous paradigm instigates a paradigm shift in our thinking and approach to Indigenous research. This shift moves from having a 'perspective' to researching from an Indigenous worldview, and / or moving from an external process to an internal process. For Leanne Simpson, "The true 'paradigm shift' in this research was from externalism to internalism...The sacred landscape within is as much a part of the "environment" as the sacred landscape outside of us" (Simpson, 1999, pp. 45 – 46). In this sense, Indigenous paradigms come from within.

Leanne elaborates in her dissertation the nature of an Anishinaabe paradigm.

The methods I used were Indigenous methods of inquiry. These methods are Indigenous knowledge, and it was not until I realized that Indigenous knowledge is a creative process, that I came to understand this. Because of the nature of Anishinaabe Knowledge, Anishinaabe ways of knowing generate "results" of a different kind.... These insights represent my understanding as an Aboriginal researcher and they are not necessarily ideas other Aboriginal Peoples share. They represent a snap shot of my own perspective, one truth amongst many... My purpose is simply to share my story. (Simpson, 1999, p. 44)

Earlier, in Chapter two, section six I illustrated Shawn Wilson's stages of developing Indigenous paradigms in research. In his fourth and fifth stages Indigenous researchers would seemingly move toward research originating within Indigenous paradigms. A continuum exists of Indigenous researchers integrating 'Indigenous perspectives' into existing eurowestern paradigms to purer applications which, I agree with Willie Ermine, belong in the community and

cultural context. Willie, in our conversation reiterates the power of his worldview very clearly when he shared his ancestry and community roots:

I'm from a community called Sturgeon Lake. A Cree community. I lived in the community and I grew up in that community. I spent a little while out of the community, so I can say I've lived there most of my life...so that community is my home...it's what I identify with and most of the things that I do are for the community. That is my grounding and I'll always try to speak from that position. Sometimes it's very challenging for me to clearly understand that's where my power source is. I'd like to protect that as much as possible from harm, any kind of harm, or any kind of abuse or anything like that. That's the community I come from. (Willie transcript, p. 1)<sup>8</sup>

This worldview illustrates two interdependent elements. It establishes location and it establishes a strong connection to territory, nation, and community. His worldview is clearly rooted in his ancestral land.

Unanimously, Indigenous researchers echo that Indigenous worldviews provide a foundation toward Indigenous methodologies. A worldview is an intimate belief system(s) that connects Indigenous people to identity, knowledge and practices. Indigenous peoples' worldviews, life philosophies, or conceptions of the world are rooted in ancestral and sacred knowledges passed through oral traditions from one generation to the next. Worldview is rooted in the traditions, land, language, relations, and culture. Mary Young argues that the worldview is in the language and to lose the language undermines the worldview of a peoples (Young, 2003). Worldview represents much more than I can outline here, but I want to say conscious Indigenous searchers acknowledge their worldview as being pivotal to their search as we produce research and knowledge. Maggie explains Indigenous methodology is rooted in ones worldview.

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<sup>8</sup> Voices from conversations are cited using first names followed by transcript page number.

If you use an Indigenous methodology, you are, by very essence, incorporating an Indigenous worldview, whether that be Cree or Saulteaux or whatever. You're going to be incorporating an Indigenous epistemology or an Indigenous worldview that will guide your methods. And that's I think where the real power comes in, in terms of Indigenous methodology, because then the research is analyzed through the eyes of an Indigenous perspective. (Maggie transcript, pp. 41-43)

Worldview profoundly impacts methodology. Worldview directly influences self as researcher, self in the research process, and methodology. Worldview grounds the research: process, motive, purpose, roles and is a source of strength and life. The entire petal flower framework is rooted in Indigenous worldviews. In my conversation with Wauzhusk he commented that methodologies in Indigenous research have been at the forefront of his mind as he negotiates the academy through his doctoral dissertation. In our conversation he spoke about the significance of an Indigenous paradigm in determining theory, motive, methodology and process, and this is a piece of what he said:

I think for an Indigenous person doing research, you're just approaching the whole thing from a different frame of mind... We're human beings. And human beings live in the world. We breathe air, we live, we die, we have to eat plants and animals in order to survive, we have to kill. Just being alive, just breathing air, drinking water, and starting fires to try to stay warm, - we affect the earth, and Indigenous people realize that. We don't try to pretend that we are not really on the earth. We realize that we have this affect on the earth and so we try to have a minimal affect on the earth. We try not to damage it through being greedy and taking too much and taking what we don't need. We only take what we need to survive and we're thankful for it. And we realize the relationships that we have with all the things around us. We acknowledge those relationships - all the time and every day we acknowledge the air, the wind that we feel on our face, we acknowledge the sun and the moon and the earth and other people that are around

us. And by acknowledging all of those things that are around us, that we have a relationship with, we sort of contextualize ourselves. We don't try to appropriate other people's knowledge or other things on the earth. Again, we're not taking more than we need and we're not being disrespectful. We show our respect for other things that exist around us that we have relationships with by acknowledging them and by acknowledging that we learn from them. We learn from our fellow human beings, we learn from plants, we learn from animals, we learn from the earth. And the ideas that are in our head and the very breath that is in our lungs comes from others. And not just other people, but it comes from everything that's around us that we're connected to. And so the research, then, is, for Indigenous people, a way of life. I think as you say, it's a way of being and doing. You live and you breathe and you believe and you do all at the same time. Your philosophy, your worldview, is all connected to the way that you do your research. (Wauzhusk transcript, pp. 3-5)

Indigenous methodologies are derived from Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies, which exist in accordance with natural law and spiritual law. Our philosophies are earth centered and we originally looked to the animals and earth for our teachings.

Further, Wauzhusk stated that worldview is an all encompassing interconnection:

It is part of that whole same philosophy or worldview that, if you realize, if you truly realize, that you are connected to every thing on the earth, not just people, but rocks and air, and everything that makes up your body comes from the earth and then you eventually go back to the earth, you realize the connection that you have with all other people, living and non-living. So it's not, to me, about religion. It's a belief in the interconnectedness of all things. (Wauzhusk transcript, pp. 12-13)

Indigenous worldviews have commonalities across Indigenous nations, but there are variations among nations depending on the territory and geography of each nation. For example, creation stories vary from nation to nation. For example, an Anishinaabe creation story is

different from an Coast Salish creation story. Our methodologies are relevant to our geography and land base. The animals we revere are different and our languages are different. However, across the nations, we do share commonalities in that our worldviews are earth-centered philosophies, express strong ties to the land, and hold reverence for Spirit and ancestors.

By following the examples of the plants and animals we remain attuned to the harmony and balance of creation. The survival of our peoples relied on the kindness, pity and generosity of creation. Dawn Hill illuminates this further:

The Native perspective is undoubtedly a spiritual view of the universe. It includes an understanding that human beings are not endowed with rights to dominate others or destroy that which is around them... The Native view takes into account the humanization/subjectification of not only people, but animals, plant life, rocks, all of Creation. This is not “mythology,” or even religion; it is a way of life, a Native consciousness. The “awareness” is complex in that it not only accounts for this world but acknowledges the guidance of the spirit world. “Knowing” involves a developed sense which can inform behaviour and influence social action. Dreams, visions, and prophecies still direct and inform Indigenous people in their everyday consciousness. More than that, “knowing” empowers the Indigenous consciousness. (Hill, 1995, pp. 63-64)

We view our position in creation with humility as we see ourselves being dependent on the earth, sun, water and air. So reverence was given to those elements of creation that gave us life, such as the earth, sun, water, and air. The awareness and knowledge we have about ourselves in relation to creation is integrated into our methodologies as we locate and story ourselves into our search processes. Our worldview / roots are informed by: our ancestral lineage, our personal and political history, our cultural make-up, our nations, and the sacred laws that govern our care and occupation of Mother Earth. Our location resides in our roots. Maggie Kovach, in our conversation elaborated on where her methodology is rooted. She said:

Through this process I've been able to talk to other Indigenous researchers, Indigenous people about Indigenous research, to hear their stories about what they see matters to them in terms of their methodology. And I've been able to do this

coming from not just an Indigenous perspective, per se, but a Cree perspective. Because I really want to – if you want to use the words of the academy, ground it within a Plains Cree epistemology, because that is who I am. I’m part Saulteaux as well. Being Cree I really connect to on a fundamental basis. And that may be because even when I was a little girl, growing up with my adopted family, we used to have a Cree Moshom come. A friend of my Dad’s. I’ve had Cree people around me ever since I was a young kid. As kid I have known myself as Cree. So Cree makes sense to me. And so I want to be able to say that I’m looking at this perspective from a Plains Cree perspective, but a Plains Cree perspective that’s my own. And my own means that it’s also a woman who has a fundamental love for this land from growing up on the Prairies. I have an appreciation for the people of this province, an understanding for their humour, an understanding for just some of the nuttiness. (laughs) But I love it. And also a woman who was raised bi-culturally. I’ve been connected with my indigeneity in my family for 20 years. But I was raised in non-Native and I honour that. So I’m going to bring that in as well. And so those things have to come in as who I am as an Indigenous woman and my worldview will entail those things. (Maggie transcript, p. 28)

Indigenous thought is holistic in terms of looking to our past to understand our present and have regard for the future. We acknowledge our relationship to all that is above, beneath and with us. Gratitude for life is encouraged and expressed on a daily basis. We are related to all of Creation: our Mother earth, Father sky, Grandfather sun, and Grandmother moon. Essentially, our knowledge is derived from the realms of the spirits, humans, animals, plants, sky world, and earth elements. In this sense our knowledge is holistic and creates a holistic worldview. Indigenous holistic theory is the most appropriate to use when doing research with First Nations communities, because “[w]hen using non-wholistic theory, difference or reduction tends to be the foci for academic investigation. When using Indigenous wholistic theory, relationship is the key focus for academic investigation.” (Marsden, 2005, p. 39). Dawn

Marsden (2005) further states that Indigenous holistic theory is an Indigenous culturally based grand paradigm with complex organisms and interfacing components. It operates with a foci on maintaining equilibrium and harmony within the whole. All the Indigenous researchers in their thesis or conversations, at one point or another, refer to Indigenous holistic paradigms and concepts shaping their research process. Jo-ann Archibald, in her dissertation, elaborates:

The First Nations philosophical concept of wholism often refers to the inter-relatedness between the intellectual, spiritual (metaphysical values and beliefs and the Creator), emotional, and physical (body and behaviour/action) realms to form a whole healthy person. The development of wholism extends to and is mutually influenced by one's family, community, Band and Nation. The image of a circle is used by many First Nations peoples to symbolize wholeness, completeness, and ultimately wellness. The never ending circle also forms concentric circles to show the synergistic influence and responsibility to the generations of Ancestors, the generations of today, and the generations yet to come. The animal/human kingdoms, the elements of Nature/land, and the Spirit World are an integral part of the concentric circles. (Archibald, 1997, p. 13-14)

Our worldviews are cyclically governed by natural and spiritual laws. Missisak in our conversations said the following:

It's what else is happening around me (referring to life as a single parent and geography) because what I did in my thesis process was so much assisted or guided by my life around me. I'm from The North. You know my background is from the land base. I grew up on the land and I grew up with a lot of understanding of herbal medicines and traditional medicines and grew up with offering tobacco or placing tobacco – we didn't say offering tobacco. That's such a White word. That we placed tobacco and to give thanks for taking what we took. So I grew up with those very basic principles that's imbedded in our language and on the land. (Missisak transcript, p. 4)

Tobacco is a sacred medicine and is used to recognize Spirit. Our ancestral ties and our spiritual ties are so strong that even if a person has just a drop of Indigenous ancestry in them, there's still a bloodline and spirit link connection and that spirit might find its voice through that

person somehow in some way, and so we have to be really careful and respectful of that understanding. Indigenous holistic thought demonstrates an understanding of our past and our understanding of the spirit in our present and how we walk in our day-to-day life. Holistic thought and processes make Indigenous methodologies distinct. Knowledge can also be internally derived according to Indigenous holistic thought. Willie Ermine (1995) acknowledges the 'inner' space and 'inner' knowing within Aboriginal epistemology. He identifies the ways inner knowing is inherent in Aboriginal epistemology in the following quote.

Those who seek to understand the reality of existence and harmony with the environment by turning inward have a different, incorporeal knowledge paradigm that might be termed Aboriginal epistemology. Aboriginal people have the responsibility and birthright to take and develop an epistemology congruent with holism and the beneficial transformation of total human knowledge. The way to this affirmation is through our own Aboriginal sources. (Ermine, 1995, p. 103)

Indigenous epistemologies, methodologies and frameworks must form the basis for Indigenous based knowledge quests (Bishop, 1998b; Cole, 2002; Duran & Duran, 2000; Ermine, 1995; Fitznor, 2002a; Kenny, 2000; Simpson, 2001; Sinclair, 2003; Wilson, 2001). At the heart of Indigenous epistemology is spirituality and as Indigenous peoples we are responsible to validate spiritually derived knowledge and the various forms of evoking this knowledge and not replicate western research paradigms (Cole, 2002). I agree with Leanne Simpson when she said, “[t]here exists an immense amount of literature reinforcing the idea that Aboriginal world views and knowledge systems are spiritually based and that much of Indigenous Knowledge is spiritually derived” (Simpson, 1999, p. 56). Spiritually derived knowledge infers that knowledge also comes from dreams, visions, ceremonies, prayer, etc... It is knowledge that we can search and gather. For example, the origin of ritual and ceremonies comes from spiritually derived knowledge. Knowledge on healing comes from the spirit realm. Spiritually guided paradigms

call attention to an existing relationship with the spirit realm, creation and those ‘power-helpers’ or spirit helpers who walk with us.

Spiritually derived knowledge is fully integrated into the consciousness of Anishinaabe People and contemporary Aboriginal People who follow traditional ways, and into Anishinaabe Knowledge”... and ... “Given that the idea that knowledge is spiritually derived is so well documented in the literature it is interesting that it is left out of most non-Aboriginal definitions of TEK. (Simpson, 1999, p. 61)

Search frameworks are of ethical and spiritual considerations and requires us to consider the act of research within the guidelines and frameworks that the Creator gave us is to honor the knowledge we have (Cole, 2000). In my conversation with Raven, she talked a lot about attending to spirit and acknowledging the spiritual paradigms and sacred epistemology in Indigenous worldviews.

Well, I think the first thing that comes to mind when I think about Indigenous methodology is attending to Spirit. So attending to the spiritual/sacred epistemology of an Indigenous worldview, Indigenous ontology, our reality. Because our reality and our ways of knowing inform everything that we do. It informs how I live my daily life, it informs how I conduct myself and my ambitions, how I play it, how I act out those things that I am directed to do or choose to do. So in terms of research, that’s the first thing that comes to mind because from that, the framework then is a sacred spiritual one. From that sacred spiritual framework, regardless of whether it’s research or anything else, there’s certain things that need to be dealt with and those are dealt with through protocol, through cultural protocol. Mine’s going to be different from yours, but basically that’s the way it plays out. And then once those things are dealt with, we have freed up energy to move ahead towards our desired goal. (Raven transcript, p. 17)

Spirituality is inherent in Indigenous epistemology which sees everything in relation to Creation, the earth and recognizes that all life has spirit and is sacred. Raven further said:

I think primarily the distinct element is that ontological and epistemological framework from which we derive not only natural law, but certain spiritual law, from which we derive practices and protocols. I mean maybe there's academics out there who say, "Well, that's kind of the way I did it" you know, "I'm Catholic and God says this and God says that. And so when I'm at work I don't fool around with my wife. When I go home, I've got to use birth control." You know? But my experience of growing up with Western religion was it was very compartmentalized, that it was relegated to Sunday between 11:00 and about 2:00 and after coffee hour and then the rest of the time was, you know, kind of the rest of your life. This framework isn't compartmentalized, it is the foundation. Yeah, it's the foundation and what else is unique is that Creator is the protocol. The reason why we engage in protocol, in the knowledge gathering and the ethical reciprocity. That's one of the primary tenets of our ontology. If it takes away from nature, you have to give it back, so that there's a balance. Because the only person that was going to lose out is you, in the long run, we know that. (Raven transcript, p. 27)

Sacred epistemologies are honoured by adhering and attending to spirit through an enactment which follows cultural protocols. The roots of these protocols and methods are derived from spiritual paradigms and that, says Raven, takes precedence over anything else.

Many of us argue for Indigenous methodologies and the articulation of Indigenous knowledge production that is grounded within Indigenous intellectual traditions. Dawn Hill began her dissertation by telling a story about how she found her voice and how the voice of Indigenous peoples should not be silenced. She describes her journeys and her dreams with the Elders and addresses her fear of 'protecting' the knowledge by not speaking or writing about it where it could be disrespected. This is a powerful entry into significant Indigenous ways of

knowing and processes of coming into the knowing. Dawn travels and attends ceremonies and talks with Elders...and talks about her fears with them and shares her dreams for guidance.

Native knowledge is alive in practice because of the oral mode of transmission. Indeed, there is an ongoing conversation in which Indigenous peoples have long participated. The experiential nature of Native knowledge fosters a rich and total sense of understanding process.... Once one enters the Indigenous mode of learning it is wholistic and accumulative, not deconstructive. (Hill, 1995, p. 67)

Dawn adds that the conversations we have with Spirit are 'normal' for Indigenous peoples and this knowledge presents a paradigm shift in how we begin to think about our research and research methodologies.

the level of assumptions differ from that of "western" assumptions. Indigenous people assume it is a real event to engage in a dialogue with the spirit world as much as with the physical world. Indigenous people assume it is normal to believe all of creation has a spirit and only the Creator can provide the laws we abide by. If we take into consideration Indigenous understanding of knowledge we can begin to fully comprehend Indigenous reality and issues arising from that reality, such as Native history, culture, resistance, spirituality, and so forth. Therefore, we must place our "facts" within a Native context to represent events truthfully. (Hill, 1995, p. 69)

Many Indigenous researchers are already promoting the need for Indigenous worldviews in order to accurately and authentically represent Indigenous peoples truths.

Any suggestion of ethical practice coming solely from a society gripped in a history of colonialism and imperialism must remain problematic for Indigenous Peoples. By correcting the prevailing errors or perception in research and asserting Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous Peoples can offer a research paradigm that models human emancipation and one that does not stymie human knowing. (Ermine, 2000, p. 133)

Indigenous philosophy and worldviews stand on their own and our methods or the ways that we search for knowledge are essentially distinct because of these worldviews. An Indigenous worldview is inherent to being Indigenous and aspects of the teachings are acquired through cultural immersion and being in relationships with the people. My worldview, for

example, is grounded in being Anishinaabe and growing up close to the land. It was transmitted to me orally from my grandparents and parents and was reinforced in practice by living close to the land. Our languages contain our worldviews and Indigenous methodologies can be found in the language. Attaining an Indigenous worldview is not a vicarious process, you cannot read about it and then live it from a mental place – you must live it holistically. An Indigenous worldview is comprised of spirit, heart, mind and body and you have to understand the circle or you have to understand what that means and how you do things and how you more or less walk. Actualizing Indigenous worldviews is discussed in the *Petals*, Chapter Ten and is holistically organized with the spirit, heart, mind and body. Clearly, conscious Indigenous scholars who bring their methodologies to their searches do so from an Indigenous worldview.

Like other Indigenous searchers, Raven Sinclair (2003) names an “indigenist” ideological stance from which methodology ought to honor Indigenous roots. She addresses the ways that Indigenous researchers honour their worldviews and satisfy their academic standards. Aboriginal researchers, she states, want to honor their Indigenous roots and “Indigenist” ideological stance. Such scholars include Brian Rice who honours his Rotinonshonni traditions by walking the journey of the Peacemaker (Rice, 2003). Evelyn Steinhauser (2002) who presents a useful overview similar to Shawn Wilson’s and privileges a variety of Indigenous scholars in her research. Laara Fitznor (2002) maps out Aboriginal knowings and processes in her research journey. Eber Hampton (1995b) distinguishes twelve standards of Indigenous education, which can also be connected to Indigenous research that are based in Indigenous worldviews. Sandy Grande (2000) summarizes a section called “praxis”, toward the development of a new red pedagogy which entails four criteria: dismantling global capitalism,

Indigenous worldview and earth centered philosophy as epistemological foundations, and tribal customs as socio-cultural frameworks.

Our worldview directly corresponds to how we approach our search. For example, Maggie began with a need to root her methodologies in an Indigenous worldview:

Methodology needs to be rooted in your worldview and it's not just about methods, it's about methods and worldview. So I had been going in thinking that, "Okay, well, there's a buffet of Western methodologies and I know I want to interview, so I'll just pick something from that buffet that fits," right? "So I'll take maybe a critical perspective or grounded theory where I could work in critical perspective or a feminist perspective or whatever and just kind of fit it in" and then I could do my interviewing, right? And then I realized, that it just wasn't fitting. I couldn't figure out how to do that. I was just becoming increasingly frustrated, because no matter which methodology I looked at that was currently available, they weren't really using an Indigenous perspective, per se. (Maggie transcript, p. 9)

Only after identifying the need for Indigenous perspectives could her organic emergent methodological process begin. In our conversation she further says:

And I couldn't find Western methodologies that were saying the same things to me. And from my own place, my own history, and my own story as an Aboriginal person, I needed – I knew I needed to go back there, I needed to go and link who I am as a person with how I approach this research. And I just couldn't find one that really fit, or one that really was able to connect me as a researcher, as an Indigenous researcher, to the Indigenous research that I was about to undertake. (Maggie transcript, p. 10)

Her search ultimately led to going home to her roots, which became central to her methodology. And 'coming home' was a blending of search for self, creating space for self and a methodological process and journey of her search for Indigenous methodologies. Our roots as

Indigenous people create a unique position from where we search. Being an Indigenous person in search for knowledge situates me in a place that non-Indigenous people can never occupy. We have inner cultural knowledge and common experiences of colonization and its' subsequent impacts on our families, communities and other relations in creation. Indigenous people can realize the reality of other Indigenous people without having it take years and years to explain and describe (as was the case with Dawn Hill's search).

### ***Principles***

Indigenous methods that are rooted in Indigenous worldviews and philosophies promote Indigenous based ethics and principles in the research process (Weber-Pillwax, 1999; Wilson, 2003). Our principles and ethics as Indigenous people set us apart from western research. For example, ten of the eleven dissertations (Archibald, Cole, Ermine, Fitznor, Hart, Hill, McGuire, Marsden, Simpson, Wheeler) identified frameworks based within Indigenous philosophies such as Indigenous holism, the seven grandfather teachings and spirituality. Essentially, the worldviews and principles of Indigenous research are embedded in the methodologies themselves. These worldviews reflect Indigenous principles such as respect, reciprocity, relevance, humility, gratitude, purpose, truth, kindness, sharing, balance, harmony, love, bravery, and wisdom. Jo-ann Archibald, for example, identified four principles of which she gained an appreciation for during her research process:

(1) respect for each other and for the cultural knowledge; (2) carrying out the roles of teacher and learner in a responsible manner (a serious approach to the work and being mindful of what readers/other learners can comprehend); (3) practicing reciprocity where we gave to the other, thereby continuing the cycle of knowledge from generation to generation; and (4) reverence towards spiritual knowledge and one's spiritual being. (Archibald, 1997, p. 88)

And Peter Cole acknowledges the intricate relationship between the teachings and ethics in the practice and art of knowing humility and exercising gratitude.

we learned to take a canoe from a cedar without felling it  
 slate for tools profuse with islands  
 not just a way of life but life itself  
 hunting trails berry trails trading trails  
 we assemble bit by bit the canoe giving thanks  
 in that urophilosophy calls 'conceptual space' t/here  
 I speak with the assembled tree nations to a particular tree  
 Asking permission to use part of its clothing its body its spirit  
 As a vehicle for my journey of words ideas intentions actions feelings  
 As a companion  
 Paddle paddle paddle swooooooooooosshhh (Cole, 2000, p. 17)

Indigenous worldviews and knowledge have our codes of conduct and ethics embedded in our philosophies and teachings. Humility is in the asking for permission and giving thanks for receiving. Laara, in her dissertation shared her ethics and protocols and the use of tobacco as a sign of gratitude to the Aboriginal people who helped her along her research journey.

Because I was relying on Aboriginal people to 'help' me with this research journey, I decided to use tobacco to demonstrate my gratitude to them. For example, for the purpose of this research project, I asked the participants to give of their experiences, their knowledge, their thoughts, and their commitment to make this thesis a reality. I also informed them that I would provide a copy of my thesis to each person that was involved: a gift to acknowledge their contributions. By understanding the research outcomes, they knew that in giving their time and energy to this project that they are contributing to a body of knowledge that is needed to contribute to the improvement of Aboriginal Peoples. Also, in preparation for the sharing circle I offered tobacco to the Elder as a way of asking him to carry out a certain responsibility. (Fitznor, 2002, p. 74)

Michael Hart used the term epistemological humility as he talked about recognizing, through his search, an awareness of the tentative nature of theories.

In relation to research processes and community participation, I regularly took part and assisted in traditional ceremonies and rituals to support my inward journey. I also tried to follow proper conduct for working with Aboriginal people traditionally. For example, I offered tobacco to the informants to show my respect to them and acknowledge that I was interested in something they had. Another example was that I offered each of them a gift of a wool blanket after

they shared their thoughts. These gifts were given in order to follow through with the concepts of mutual support and maintaining harmonious relationships. (Hart, 1997, p. 119)

Patricia McGuire relied on the ethics that she was taught from her community and, like Willie Ermine, asserts the community context as carrying forth our roots:

The ethics I followed were ones I learned in my community. If the Anishinabek Metis trust that all knowledge derives from the Creator and that it is primarily spiritual in content and essence, then dreams and ceremonies are the way to approach life. When I had dreams of my father giving me advice, I knew that I should continue with this study. (McGuire, 2003, p. 78)

Patricia adds the demand placed upon her as a researcher following Anishinabek ethics:

The Anishinabek and Anishinabek Metis believe that we are put on Earth to live our lives in Menobimadizenwin (life in balance, the Good life, respectful life). I have tried to include these teachings in this study in a contemporary environment. As I prepared to undertake this study, and was thinking about ethics, I realized that Anishinabek ethics are more exacting and demanding than any others that I am aware of. These teachings forced me to look at my self and how I related and interacted with my social world. They did not allow for academic distance. Bravery, wisdom, love, respect, humility, and truth guided this study and contributed to its trustworthiness and validity. (McGuire, 2003, p. 78)

All Indigenous researchers pursued their research with a goal of acting in accordance with the teachings of “menobimadizenwin” – to live life in balance and to have respect for all of life.

Patricia McGuire used the seven grandfather teachings of the Anishinabe as an ethical foundation to ‘menobimadizenwin’ in the research process. In our conversation she expressed the importance of checking with community.

I decided I just wanted to stand my ground on what I wanted to write on. If I’m going to write on my community, I have to make sure that it’s respectful to my community. I have to make sure that people in my community agree to what I’m doing. So which means I have to keep checking back eh. (Kiskshekabayquek transcript, pp.1-2)

Standing ones ground, in Indigenous contexts, means that our research methodologies are geared toward operationalizing our worldviews, regaining our humanity and embracing that Anishinaabek/Indigenous way of life.

Respect is unanimously agreed upon by Indigenous scholars and researchers as a core principle (Absolon & Willett, 2004; Archibald, 1993; Battiste & Henderson, 2000a; Fitznor, 1998; Graveline, 2000; Gross, 2002; Kenny, 2000; McPherson & Rabb, 2001; Sinclair, 2003; Wilson, 2003). Respect is a holistic value and can be enacted at all levels of research. Enacting respect is interwoven and defined throughout this entire dissertation. For example to learn about the history of Aboriginal peoples and develop a critical consciousness is to illustrate respect. To acknowledge and validate Indigenous philosophies and worldviews is to practice respect. Dawn Marsden promotes this as ethical practice.

In a nutshell, and in hindsight, this paper promotes another, perhaps Indigenous, methodology for doing coursework and research. Identity is dynamic and situational, knowledge is wholistic and rooted in genealogies connected to the land, and the questioning and sharing of ideas through speaking, writing and publishing can be accomplished more appropriately by greater attention to etiquette, or the ethics of personal relationship. If we can get beyond polarization and competitiveness, acknowledge the dynamic nature of both identity and knowledge, and take to heart the concept of relationship, then we are better empowered to seek knowledge, in relationship, with respect. (Marsden, 2005, p. 58)

Lawrence Gross (2002) states that respect is in the Anishinaabe teachings of Bimaadziwin, which loosely translates to mean a good life. The life goal of the old Anishinaabe was to follow the Anishinaabe teachings of Bimaadziwin and respecting the dictates and beliefs enabled this. We need to apply these understandings and teachings today to rebuild and recover from colonial trauma. Respectful research implies a search process with a goal toward creating 'good life'. In my conversations, respect is enacted when Indigenous worldview and knowledge are positioned at the forefront. Respect is enacted by following protocols and exercising reciprocity. For

example, Michael in our conversation talked about the importance of relationship and emphasized how he respects his relationships with Elders.

One of the most important is relationship. For example, there's one elder that I met a couple years ago, so I only known him [for a short while]. And I've known another fellow from there who I met a couple of years ago. They're from different communities, but they're both residing in Saskatoon. And I initially though, "Well, maybe I could consider talking with them" not interviewing, but talking with them, listening to them mostly. But then I thought I didn't have a strong enough relationship with them. And that's very different than a Western point of view, which would say, "Well, you need to break out of that relationship and not let it interfere as much as you can". Whereas whenever I pay attention to Elders and whenever I see learning going on, that's very significant. There's an emphasis on that kind of relationship between people. (Michael transcript, pp. 6-7)

Indigenous people know the ancestors are watching. The significance of ancestors cannot be ignored. Many Indigenous people pay homage to the ancestors and turn to sacred ceremonies to tap into and seek out ancestral knowledge.

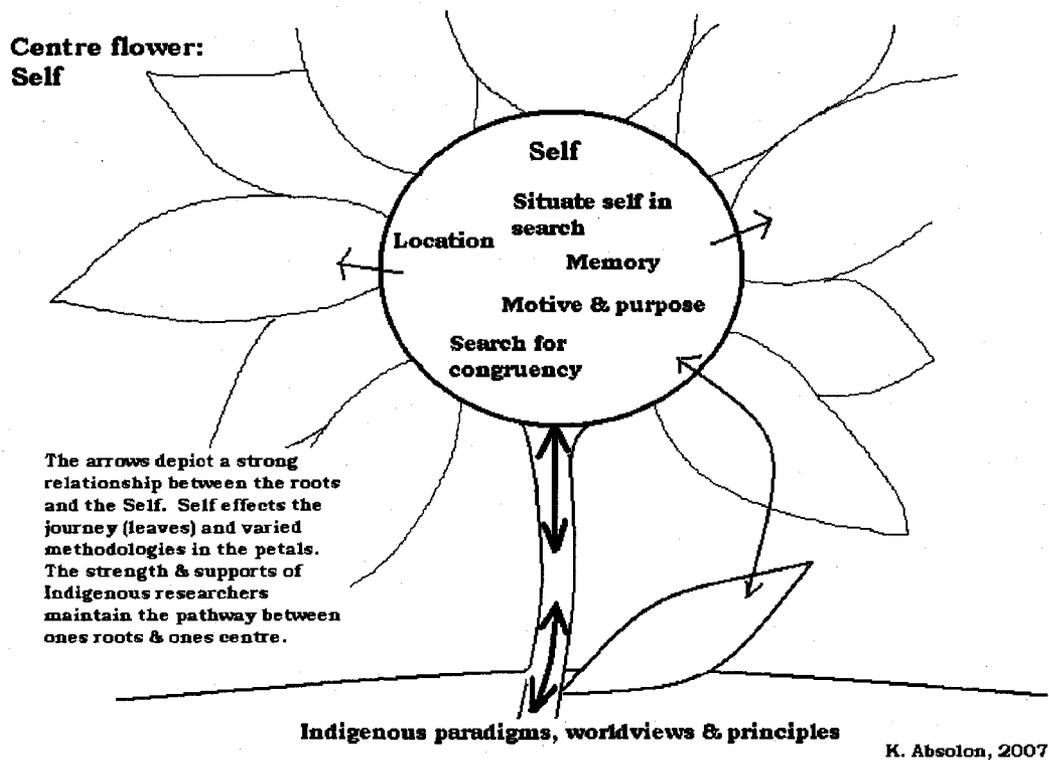
Throughout my search, Indigenous researchers shared their experiences of accessing portals of knowledge, understanding and direction through dreams, ceremonies, visions, prayer and rituals. The ancestors are there waiting to share their knowledge. The map to get there is in Aboriginal knowledge, protocols and ethics and more specifically within Aboriginal epistemology.

Honouring Indigenous knowledge and experiences was a central principle guiding my search. For example, I consciously privilege Indigenous sources of data. I talked with Indigenous researchers. I read Indigenous research projects and I privileged Indigenous authors and scholars. These principles emanate from a need to make Indigenous knowledge and scholarship central to Indigenous research. It is Indigenous searchers who enact their worldviews, philosophies and principles in their searches. It is Indigenous searchers who carry

memory, history, experiences, knowledge, language, and worldview. We now turn to the centre flower where the self as a research instrument is discussed.

**Chapter Seven:  
The Centre Flower:  
Self as Central**

The centre flower represents the Self. The self is central to Indigenous research. The centre of the flower represents the Self and the ways Indigenous researchers situate themselves in their methodologies. It includes the researchers location, memory, motive, and search for congruency.



**Figure 12. Centre flower illustration.**

What we see revealed through Indigenous research is the researcher, the Self. Within the Self exists millennium of Indigenous ancestral knowledge, teachings and Spirit. Willie Ermine in the following eloquently reveals the significance of Self in the search for knowledge.

Aboriginal epistemology is grounded in the self, the spirit, the unknown. Understanding of the universe must be grounded in the spirit. Knowledge must be sought through the stream of the inner space in unison with all instruments of knowing and conditions that make individuals receptive to knowing. Ultimately it was in the self that Aboriginal people discovered great resources for coming to grips with life's mysteries. It was in the self that the richest source of information could be found by delving into the metaphysical and the nature and origin of knowledge. Aboriginal epistemology speaks of pondering great mysteries that lie not further than the self. (Ermine, 1995, p. 108)

Similarly, Jo-ann Archibald through her research process gained an appreciation for “reverence towards spiritual knowledge and one’s spiritual being” (Archibald, 1997, p. 88), again illustrating the significance of self as vessel from and to which knowledge flows. Indigenous research also involves learning about the inner self as the doorway to understanding and gaining knowledge of how to be in mind, body, spirit and heart in the outer world. When I asked Michael Hart if there was a story behind his research, he replied “Is there a story behind my search? Somewhat. I’m still trying to unravel it. And the story is “Who am I?” My identity is always a topic...” (Michael transcript, p.43). Dawn Marsden, in our conversation talked about herself in her dissertation and literally said that she was all over her dissertation. She further linked herself directly to her motives:

The motivation, “Why am I doing this?” It’s about locating myself in my motivations. Like “Why am I doing this? Who am I doing this for?” And of course I’m doing this for myself as well as for these Elders that I’ve been talking to and for the reasons that many people have for maintaining the teachings and passing them on and ensuring that some of the barriers are challenged. So for me it was about exposing myself so that people can understand me as a human being and about why I’m so passionate about this. (Dawn transcript, p. 32)

Additionally, Leanne Simpson (1999) and Patricia McGuire (2003) both identify self-responsibility as learners and searchers and to accept responsibility for our intentions, understandings and knowledge by writing Self into your research.

The Indigenous researchers in this thesis are at the center of their methodological process. Indigenous worldviews and principles are actualized by Indigenous searchers who are consciously connected to their roots and who have supportive channels to actualize their worldviews. Central tendencies of Indigenous research come from the centre of self and from understanding self in relation to the whole. In many cases, the Indigenous searchers utilized a self-referential approach and an experiential approach to gathering knowledge. For example, Patricia (McGuire, 2003) and Leanne (Simpson, 1999) used culturally based frameworks where they spoke from their own cultural context and from their own experiences. In our methodologies we need to privilege Indigenous worldviews at the center of our searches and move out from there. Our medicine bundle is our own life. Indigenous researchers become the vehicle for the expression and application of all that we remember and know. For example, this search is grounded within an Anishinaabe perspective and by an Anishinaabe kwe who loves the land and who is also bi-cultural. My self is comprised of both Anishinaabe and British ancestry with a culmination of experiences that resulted from that blend. Our searches become a portal or a doorway to learning about self and self in relation with creation. Use of self in Indigenous methodologies may open doors that you never thought possible. It connects you to family, community and nation. In that sense, Self in the research process cultivates a healing movement of being reconnected and remembered from the dismemberment and disconnections created by colonial policy and actions such as the *Indian Act* and residential schools. Self as Indigenous methodology really has no time barriers and will always travel with you as you journey in and out of searches for knowledge.

Other central tendencies discussed in the centre flower are further related to Self, location, situating self in the search, memory, motive and purpose, and searching for congruency.

Indigenous researchers bring their worldviews, history, experiences, culture and tradition to the academy with an interdependent relationship to Self in the research. These methodological tendencies were expressed consistently in the dissertations, in the conversations and acknowledged in the learning circle. They are not absolute, nor are they separable from one's roots, process, academic goals and / or methods.

### *Self*

Many of the research processes are described as a personal process and because of our situatedness, as Indigenous people, our findings come from within. In addition our methodologies in our searches can be internal processes as a recognition that knowledge sources within are as important as those we externally seek. Maggie Kovach, in our conversation explains why she situated herself in her methodology:

This Indigenous methodology that I'm embarking on as an Indigenous woman, it's not just about walking into the university and picking up a methodology that looks good from a book. It's about your own life. It's about who you are. It's about how you have engaged in the world as an Indigenous person, what you know, what's in your story. And if you're going to do this in a way that I think is going to have meaning, and not just meaning to the larger world, but meaning to yourself, you have to go back and you have to go back into story. You have to go back into your own narrative, and you have to find out what pieces are missing for you. And if you're feeling unsettled, why? Why was I feeling unsettled? Why did that book by Silko just throw me for a loop? What was it about that dream that was coming to me that was saying 'home is so important'? And so that's part of how my methodology emerged, and that's kind of the funny thing about it. Because I was going down this process where you go. You decide on a topic. You pick a methodology and then you go forward, right? And what happened to me is I was trying to do that. In fact, I had picked phenomenology. But all of a sudden, the more I inquired into Indigenous ways of knowing, the more the

knowing showed me the methodology I needed to take. So it emerged. (Maggie transcript, p. 15)

As Maggie described how her methodology became so interdependent with her life story, I concluded that in Indigenous methodologies, knowledge of oneself is essential to any inquiry. Our knowledge is ultimately what we have when we are on our search. Leanne Simpson (1999) identified Anishinaabe ways of learning and acquiring knowledge and stated that we begin with self-knowledge. In her dissertation she integrates personal experiences and perspectives, to the body of literature to demonstrate how Traditional Ecological Knowledge is constructed and uses her personal voice in italics. Like Leanne, many Indigenous searchers focus on their personal lessons and teachings about the world and their learning experiences. Use of Self is common and implies Indigenous searchers become directly involved in the process. The self is woven throughout the process and creates a weave linking self to methods. A goal of Indigenous learning and searching is ultimately to learn more about our Indigenous self, history, worldview, culture and so on. Integrating self as methodology, Leanne shares,

When I initially met the community members that would become my mentors, I asked them to teach me about the land and the environment using their own Anishinaabe ways. They agreed, and then immediately planned to take me out into the bush. We continued spending time on the land throughout my work, because being out on the land, doing ceremonies, dreaming and speaking with Elders were the methods they used to teach me. These methods were their methods. (Simpson, 1999, p. 43)

Dawn Hill (1995) used herself when she worked separately with the Lubicon women and provided her own cultural knowledge on the clan mothers and role of women and helped women get together. She found that working with and writing about the women was easier because they weren't involved in the political negotiations and their like-mindedness made the communication and sharing freer. In Winona's (Stevenson, 2000) thesis the framework and foundation is based

on her own Nehiyawiwihitamawakans, Cree teachings, which come from many sources: family, friends, teachers, recorded oral history collection and a handful of Cree writings. Doing oral history the Cree way is as much about social relations as acquiring information. I really like her expression of the “cumulative knowledge-bundle” (p. 14), meaning the knowledge one accumulates over the course of a lifetime. It was transmitted from relatives and was shared with her to use with respect and integrity. The origins of this type of knowledge, Winona further states, does not lend itself to footnoting according to academic convention.

With confidence, I assert that conscious Indigenous researchers are doing research with other Indigenous peoples, communities, cultures, and lands related to Indigenous issues. Raven Sinclair (2003) says, “Insider research” is where the researcher is a member of the researched group and the research meets several criteria such as: native involvement, usefulness to the community, and cultural relevance (p. 119). Conscious Indigenous scholars are searching topics essential to their own wellness, goal of living a good life, or making the world better for those generations yet to come. In the theses, conversations and learning circle, all the Indigenous searchers were engaged for a greater cause beyond the production of a graduate dissertation. We are about wanting to make a contribution for the collective good of the community, nation or ‘Indian situation’ in Canada. This is all about saying and being who we are.

### ***Location***

All of the thesis authors located who they were to varying degrees. Location can include identifying your nation, name, clan, family, territory, and where we receive our teachings from. Almost all of the researchers detailed stories about critical life experiences and shared personal aspects of their life. In this sense, searching for knowledge promotes an identification of location which I think is distinctly Indigenous and goes directly against the positivist

eurowestern research presumption that authors' location doesn't matter. In Indigenous contexts location does matter. People want to know who you are, what you are doing and why. Peter identifies his clan and community and talks at length about the landscape, it's people and his relatives (Cole, 2000).

I am from the grizzly bear clan and the wolf clan my community is *n'quat'qua skatin saktin samahquam xa'stsqa* (port douglas) mount currie the old pemberton meadows village and those places up there where people do not live anymore because the animals and fish are gone the forest have been cut down and the water is polluted my community is the towns and reserves along the fraser where my people live ..." (Cole, 2000, p. 7)

Dawn Marsden also locates herself quite extensively, situates her research within her own life context and connects her learning to her own history (Marsden, 2005). They are stories worth telling because it is your location that distinguishes you from everyone else. "You must say who you are when you tell your truth. When discussing whatever phenomenon you are concerned about, you have to speak from your own experience. This is done so that your truth is apparent" (McGuire, 2003, p. 64). Jo-ann Archibald says she locates to establish validity for her "self-referential approach". Dawn Hill (1995), at the onset located herself in the following:

I am a Native woman, Mohawk, Wolf Clan, a member of the Hodenasaunne people of Six Nations of the Grand River. My name is Dega ge ja whistja gay—Flower by the River. I live and walk in my grandmother's footsteps. I walk with my ancestors, listen to them and love them. It is my ancestors whom I obey first—even at the expense of personally loosing a great deal for a greater purpose. I will tell you about this later. Being a Native woman, I also live with all the negative social problems associated with our people: high rates of alcoholism, violence, suicide, ill-health, high mortality, poverty, and despair. They are not statistics to me. They are real—a part of me, my everyday life. Writing this dissertation as a requirement for my Ph.D. in anthropology is also a part of my reality. (Hill, 1995, p. 1)

I really like this passage because her location is not obscured or hidden in the pages, nor does she try to situate her research independent of herself. We are not left guessing who the author is or

where her perspective is coming from. The location is up front, clear and visible. Location, in Indigenous contexts, is ethical research. Because of the biased and obscured history of research on and about Indigenous peoples, visibly locating allows the reader to make his/her own judgments about the research presented, knowing that there is no such thing as neutral. Location reveals who we are beyond a family name. It reveals who we are in relation to the world, the earth, our nations, our clans and so much more. Patricia McGuire eloquently connected location and truth when she said: “You must say who you are when you tell your truth. When discussing whatever phenomenon you are concerned about, you have to speak from your own experience. This is done so that your truth is apparent” (McGuire, 2003, p. 64). Our location reveals a worldview and cultural orientation, which is central to what and how we search.

Locating oneself may elicit a story, a narrative of one’s name, family and history. Location involves establishing one’s connection to the land, spirits and ancestors. Location is central to establishing legitimacy and credibility as a researcher. For example, Laara Fitznor, in her thesis and in our conversation, shared stories of her name, her Cree identity, and family. She talked about the political, legal and cultural labels of herself and the impact of Bill C31 on her family, particularly the women.

In order to situate myself in this study [reference to her dissertation], I invoke an Aboriginal tradition of orality: Atchanookewin (storytelling), albeit in writing. In this section I tell a story about me: where I started my path, where I have been, and where I am going with this research. Like the quotes above, one of the ‘gifts’ of knowledge that I learned from Aboriginal knowings and processes is the importance to acknowledge who we are and tell where we are going. (Fitznor, 2002b, p. 20)

Location exposes you so that audience can understand the position from which you search. It reveals what you stand for and relates to your motives. Location links experiences of the self with experiences of others and facilitates connections and associations and heals relations.

Identifying self as an 'insider' searcher is important so that the audience can form their own opinions regarding your validity as a researcher in Indigenous territories. They can discern for themselves what they want to harvest from your search and what they want to leave behind. How you locate can influence the kind of influence you are going to have and who will listen to you. It's time to share and give back and we share ourselves and put ourselves forward for these reasons and more (Absolon & Willett, 2005).

Location varies from person to person. Depending on the context that you are in, you identify yourself accordingly. As we grow, change, learn and transform, how we locate changes. This is common because of our colonial history and experiences with residential schools and adoptions. Dawn Marsden (2005) gives an example of how she does this. For years she has

been learning about different ways to think about my own identity. At first, I didn't know I had one; other than mild discomfort and a sense of not belonging in most situations, didn't realize that this concept had real effects in my day to day life... this personal confession is relevant here, to examine the concept of situational identities. What I have described is a brief template upon which issues of identity play out: what my ancestries are, where I'm from, what I speak, the primary conflicts, consequences and conclusions. (Marsden, 2005, p. 55)

Location addresses issues of accountability, validity and reliability (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Monture-Angus, 1995; Sinclair, 2003). Margaret Benston (1989) states that the notion of scientific objectivity is in fact pseudo-objectivity and argues neutrality in terms of gender, race, socialization, and humanness does not exist. I believe many researchers falsely present their research as objective simply because they omit locating themselves. Personally locating oneself, as an Indigenous principle and methodology, counters false notions of neutrality and objectivity (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Benston, 1989). In my conversation with Dawn Marsden, she articulated the relationship between location and standing ones ground as an act of assertion and resilience:

Coming out as Indigenous, you know, coming out as not only Indigenous, but coming out as embracing Indigenous worldviews and ways of being and ways of knowing, and ways of doing things because these things all have operated in my life, all my life. But the old situational identity thing, like I'm a private person and I don't go around telling people what I know and what I don't know and who's taught me what. So in a way this was coming out as putting my private self on display and also putting myself as wholly supportive in identifying with Indigenous worldviews and ways of being. So for anyone who had any doubt about where my allegiances lie, they won't have after reading my dissertation. (Dawn transcript, p. 33)

Through location, we establish and define our relationships within the research context. Given the reciprocal nature of Indigenous communities, Indigenous researchers naturally identify their relations within a community and offer linkages between themselves and the research process (Bishop, 1998b). Winona Stevenson, Dawn Marsden and Dawn Hill shared their experiences in illustrating the link between location and research relationships. Relationality is woven throughout Indigenous scholarship and conveys an understanding that we are beings in relationship with all of creation (Wilson, 2003). Location is situated in the Self and comes from the Self, yet it is explicitly related to ones paradigm, worldview and is guided by ones principles.

### ***Situate Self in the Search***

One day, I realized that Indigenous methodologies are not just about the hows, but also the who! The methodology is just as much about the person doing the searching as it is about the search. Unanimously, all Indigenous researchers identified the importance of our personal connections to our research. In all the theses and throughout the conversations and learning circle, Indigenous researchers echoed that when we do research we are ultimately doing research

about ourselves, families, communities, nations, histories, experiences, stories, and cultures.

Karen Martin (2002) sets forth a framework for Indigenist research based in Aboriginal worldviews that is distinct to each nation. She states that situating oneself precedes the actual research. In my conversation with Wauzhusk, he personally connects with his research on Aboriginal student retention and like other Indigenous researchers, says a personal connection is an ethical connection.

It's an image that's supposed to be portraying an Aboriginal person and that affects you. So these images are not about nobody, they're about me. Every one of these images is about me and so that's related somehow to your story, to your position, and to autobiography. When you point at that picture of students in residential school and you say, "This is my mother," it's more than powerful. It's connecting that occurrence, that residential school experience with you personally. ... And I think there has to be a personal connection in our research, and there is very much for me. It's a personal connection. What's my research about? It's about me getting kicked out of school. It's about me dropping out of school. (Wauzhusk transcript, p. 27)

Indigenous methodologies are directly and distinctly bound to the Indigenous person doing the search. Generic principles such as respect, caring, reciprocity, and so on, become specifically Indigenous when joined to the insider knowledge and meaning of the experiences and contexts (roots, history and culture) of those who are searching and they are doing searches usually with other Indigenous people. This was a big epiphany for me. Our personal, familial, cultural, traditional and historical connections are evident in our searches.

Situating ourselves in our search is distinctive. Our research is personal! We are subjective and we want to see benefit to our communities, our families and for generations to come. Kishebabayquek, in our conversation, told such a rich story relating to her personal responsibility and obligation for situating herself in her research. Her research was personal.

Her story illustrates how her research journey centres on her and her family and how she came to write about her father's knowledge of the Anishinaabek Metis. She begins by talking about the survival of knowledge. In the following story, Kishebabayquek speaks with a combined English and Anishinaabe dialect:

Okay, in my Dads generation in his family there was two of my aunties on his side of the family still alive, and two of my uncles and three of my aunties were still alive. As far as anybody was making sure those stories survived. 'Cause [my dad] was raised in the Hudson's Bay Post, his father was manager, he was on the trap line, knew life in the bush, and he knew medicines. He actually lived out in the bush with people still living in wigwams and actually he knew all that lifestyle. He knew how to survive like that. But out of his whole family he was the only one that was taught that way of life. And then I realized that is why he wrote it down. He might have had 16 children, but as far as making sure those stories continued or the Lake Nipigon land stories, he had to make sure that they continue. And the best way to make sure they continue is to write everything down and because things have changed. People aren't just sitting around listening to old people talk about stories anymore.

Before my dad lost consciousness [in hospital] he told my mother... "Dolly's gotta finish those stories and tell her to get those stories back from this guy. She has to finish them." I neglected that obligation for about 16 years. My dad died in '87 and we started looking at those stories in 2000. So 13 years I neglected my responsibility. I said that I forgot, but I really didn't. It's still hard to talk about sometimes eh! But when I started thinking about it I wondered why did my dad do that (tell my mom I had to finish the stories). He had actually already given the manuscript to this other guy and this guy was trying to figure this out.

I was thinking why me and maybe it had to do with my mom's side. When I was a little kid I'd be hanging out and there are things that I know and the others will ask me, "well who showed you that?" or "how did you know to do that?" For example, I was cutting up moose at my mom's house and my sister comes in and I

was looking at her sittin' there and said to her, "what are you doing?" I threw a knife at her [laughs out loud] and said "come here and help me". She says [the sister] "well I've never done that before!" I say "what do you mean, you've never done that before?" I'm looking at her and so I showed her [how to cut the moose] and she says "you know this is the first time I've done this" and she's one of my older sisters. I said "don't you remember when we were kids, this was always going on". She said she never had to do it. I said "well this isn't the first moose I cut up" [laughs and laughs]. I learnt this from my dad and my brothers. My mom said that you [Kishebabayquek] were the only one [of 7 sisters] who would do that when you were growing. The others wouldn't skin a rabbit or do anything and she said "you were always there and checking out what people were doing" and so I thought okay my dad choose me to tell stories. I have to make sure that's done properly. So I thought okay... to make my family understand and to make my community understand and this larger academic environment that I was in and the audiences that I have to try and get to. So I put it in a framework ... then I starting writing... (Kiskshekabayquek transcript, p. 4)

Like Kishebabayquek, all of the Indigenous researchers in this study indicated that their research is connected to who they are as Indigenous people. There's a personal, cultural, political, and spiritual investment and we're not detached about that investment. We are directly tied to why we're doing what we're doing and our searches are purposeful. Kishebabayquek further talked about accountability, purpose, and truth and the relationship between herself in her research.

If I wanted that story that I was part of crafting to be considered true in my family and my community, I had to make sure I was included or else I was just generating knowledge for no reason. And you don't generate knowledge for no reason, 'cause when you start looking at *nandagikenim*, it's an active verb. It's like animate. It's alive and *naandamin*, it just means "know". It's like knowledge, but that you are trying to know something. It is like a verb, *needamin*. It's never static knowledge like in books. It's always something you're trying to get to and you never have people, old men or old women say that

they know things. This is going to be based on truth, and the way that my family and community determines truth is that people have to be part of the story that you're telling. Also, you have to make sure that you're accepting the responsibility when you do it. You also have to make sure that there's a relationship between what you're trying to know and yourself. So you have to make sure ceremonies are there, even if you are just laying tobacco out, and I think I've done that a few times when I was praying during my masters. I'll probably be doing that during my dissertation too. Making sure that that the spirits are full. If I'm trying to do this it's gotta reflect, not just well on me, but it has to reflect well on my family and community and that I'm doing the best job possibly and in the right way possible. So I did that and when I got to the point where I could see that it was gonna be finished and that it was the way it was suppose to be. (Kiskshekabayquek transcript, p. 9)

Kishebabayquek's story shows that situating self in Indigenous research is different from the Euro-Western research in that we acknowledge and include the relationships between self, spirit, responsibility, knowledge and truth. Situating self in Indigenous searches positions location, political climate, environment, history, and cultural knowledge up front and centre.

### *Memory*

Eber Hampton (1995a) wrote that memory comes before knowledge. In this thesis memory comes before motive. In my own search, I have markers in my memory of who I am and where I come from, which preceded my motivation. In my memory I return home to that place that is culturally safe to be who I am. As a child who grew up in the bush, I was taught to look back so that I would recognize my path in order to return home. Do not get lost was the message! I learnt from an early age to always gaze behind me to etch the landscape and it's markings in my memory. I learnt to watch for distinct landmarks along the way and I learnt not to wander too far without proper tools and to always be prepared in case I did get lost. But I

never got lost and I knew how to walk and navigate my journeys on the land. I feel like this search for Indigenous methodologies is similar. In searching the landscape of Indigenous research methodologies I found that all of the researchers journeyed into their memory and began remembering who they are and what they know in their own research. Maggie, for instance shared:

I started reading Eber's stuff and that really just threw me for a loop. In particular, his one article on *Memory Comes Before Knowledge*. And to me what that article is about –he talks about his own research, but the main message of that article is you have to go back in – I think he uses the metaphor, “the sacred medicine bundle that is your own life,” you have to go and find out what your motive is, what's your story, go back into memory, why are you doing this? (Maggie transcript, p. 14)

Indigenous scholars, through their search, reconnect to their ancestors, land, culture, traditions, language, history, and knowledge. The research, in a sense, becomes a catalyst to remember who we are and what we know and to bring those truths forward. In my writing I've thought about how we remember and when we locate we remember where we come from and who we are. I've used remembering in two senses: one related to memory and one is related to reconnecting to our ancestors. By remembering we do two things: one is that we bring our truth forward and tell the stories that we need to tell and the second is that we reconnect with our communities because we've been dismembered through residential schools, relocations, Indian Act policies, and child welfare authorities (Absolon & Willett, 2004). We have a history of being brutally dismembered from our families, communities, culture, language, ancestors, and so on. So when we remember, we actually become re-membered and reconnected with our history, family members, identities, language, culture, and ancestors and our open wounds can begin to heal. Remembering fosters our recovery of our truth and roots. Remembering our truth is

important for Indigenous searchers. For example, through memory I reconnect with my grandmother and my grandfather. I reconnect with the context I grew up in and claim the knowledge and teachings I received in the bush. I don't forget where I have come from or who brought me here. I include those memories and write about them and talk about them. Dawn Marsden, in our conversation articulated how both her Masters and Doctoral research facilitated a remembering process:

One of the biggest gifts that I've received is remembering what was taught to me and who taught me - my father and my grandmother in particular. And all those things that they made conscious, in my mind, whereas before they were operating unconsciously, like how to engage with people and what is a respectful way and about that vigilance and awareness and all those little subtleties that are steeped in values; values and ways of seeing the universe and relationships. And so that was a real big gift. By passing on the teachings that I've received, I've become aware of the teachings that I've got and where I got them from. I find how I teach is I'll offer a personal anecdote like, "Oh, that reminds me of this situation" or that, and storytelling, or when So-and-So said this to me and I felt this way. And then people can take whatever they want from it. So the whole process was about remembering what I know. The previous thesis, the MA was about remembering who I am and this one is about remembering what I know. Yeah. So it was really empowering in that sense, too, it was a real gift. One of my goals was to start giving back, you know, and start doing things to make changes for the good of all our relations and finding out what I know is a good way to start passing it on. (Dawn transcript, p. 58)

As Dawn says, remembering occurs within the self and relates to worldview and where we come from. Remembering creates cultural mirrors that validate our life and experiences and other Indigenous peoples too. The gift of our searches ends up being in the remembering of ancestral ties, their legacies and knowledge. Our histories on the land go back generation after

generation and when we remember the territories of our families and communities we become reconnected. Searching becomes a gift that invokes memory and memory both re-members us to our nations, families and communities and brings knowledge forward that was meant for us. If we don't remember who we are, then how can we pass that on to our children and families? Remembering means that we do not forget our ancestors and grandparents and relations who fought and suffered for our survival. Remembering is giving back and contributing to the continuance of Indigenous peoples way of life and existence.

### *Motive & Purpose*

Across the discussions in one way or another everyone expressed the importance of knowing the motive(s) for their search. For some it was a family and / or community request and need. For others the search resulted from a call for more information or knowledge in particular areas to further the 'Indian cause'. One of our motives as Indigenous researchers must be to show that, despite the ignorance of the western world, our theories and methodologies are concrete and real. They have governed our survival for millennium and will continue to do so generations into the future. Dawn talks about the desire of people to share this knowledge to ensure it lives on.

The most important aspect of the process for me was listening to what everyone had shared with me. Because there was a real urgency in what people wanted to share, wanted to be shared with others. And so like putting that together, putting those stories together in a way that people can hear like the importance of those messages and – so that was a real focal point for me. Because that, to me, was the purpose, was to support the transmission of traditional knowledge. (Dawn transcript, p. 18)

Our ultimate motive is to ensure our knowledge and methodologies live on. Indigenous academic searches are distinct because our methodologies contain an awareness of and integration of the ancestors and their families. It's about survival. Survival means bringing our history, traditions, experiences, knowledge, and methodologies forward. Survival ensures and safeguards that our children and grand children and great grand children, will too, know who they are and where they come from. Raven, in our conversation stated,

Our agenda is premised on survival, it's premised on the mitigation of colonial fallout and harm. And so of course in terms of the principles of OCAP, Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession, I think there really should be another one there - that's Benefit. Maybe it should be BOCAP, Benefit, Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession. (laughs) Because that's the assumption, is that research is done for the benefit of someone, whether it's our communities, the younger generations coming behind us or whatever. That of course fits with our epistemology, our teachings of natural law, that you give consideration to the next seven generations. (Raven transcript, p. 40)

We do not want future generations to get lost. For example, the nature of my search is about making sure that those methodological pathways survive. The academy is the avenue in which I'm working and making a contribution. The motive is much bigger than that. It's not for the academy. It's for the people. It's for the other students who are also searching for congruency. And it's for our ancestors. It's for my grandparents because they initially intended their grandchildren to have this knowledge. People have said that this work is important and to me I feel my search needs to be purposeful to my ancestors and the broader goals of survival.

Personal reasons generally underlie motive. Searching for Indigenous searchers is more than a project, a thesis or dissertation. Why do research? Why do we choose the topics we do? Why do we situate ourselves within our searches? Knowing our motives for our searches

requires an awareness of our location and consciously situating oneself within our research context. Eber Hampton, during our conversation very eloquently talked about motive and purpose.

There's two things that are way more important now that I'm not satisfied yet that I've been able to implement. Those two things are the motive for the research: being very clear in my own mind why I'm interested in that topic. What I found out for myself and for graduate students that I've worked with is that Walter McCollach said all 'all impersonal questions arise for personal reasons' and that what I found for myself and a few students I was working with...was that there was some reason that their topics were chosen. And that if I understood what my reason was, that the research would improve. I gave a speech about that once, it got transcribed and published. So the whole area of underlying motivation has become more important to me. Awareness of motivation and a lot of times you know we have this idea of research as a rational process, but I believe it is a more emotionally motivated process and what my academic training did, to a great extent, even my Indigenous training did – was to try and minimize the emotion. It may be just my misunderstanding of some of my training that encouraged me to not even to be aware of what was impelling me or why I was interested enough in something that I would put all that work into it over a long period of time. So that awareness of the motivation and the feelings of the reason why it's important to me is interesting because the better I understand my motives the more on target the work is.

Where I said there was two things that have changed for me: one is to pay more attention to being aware of my motives of being interested in a topic; the other one is to think more about use. Knowledge for something not necessarily just knowledge about something, and part of that is my fields that I ended working in, you know education and health are applied fields anyways. So I'm interested in knowledge for something. Being very clear about that within myself when I'm doing that. (Eber transcript, pp. 4-5)

Jo-ann Archibald (1993) retells a story Eber Hampton told her about ‘re-searching’ your motives for doing research and when doing so, asking yourself: are my motives and methodologies grounded in First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing? I think of fasting and recall that before I gave my tobacco to go fasting<sup>9</sup> I was always asked by my traditional teacher to clarify my motives for seeking renewal. The reasons, rationales, or motives for searching or re-searching may guide how we go about it. Wauzhusk’s motives point to his roots, ancestors and family:

There are responsibilities that I have to people around me, to my family, to you, and to my children, and to my parents and my siblings, and my cousins, and just on from there, to acquaintances and to people I work with. There are people that look up to me and people that rely on me to be consistent and to be reliable and to teach them. You know, if I didn’t try to do those things and if I’m not really paving the road for people to come after me, then I’m not really being very responsible. And I want my children to be able to come after me and to be proud, to see what I’ve done, because I believe they will be able – you know, in not very long they will be able to look at what I’m doing now, to see what I’m writing, and to understand what it was that I did and to see me in a different context, not just as a father, but as an academic, I guess, and as a researcher, and as an Aboriginal person. And I want them to be proud of me. I don’t want them to just think, “Well, this guy just followed the status quo and he was afraid to try something new and he was afraid to fail and he was afraid to work hard.” No, I want to work as hard as I can and do the best job that I am capable of doing, to the point that – you know, I want to maintain my health and I want to live my life, but I work as hard as I can in those parameters. And without falling over and getting sick and all that, I work as hard as I can, because I believe I have a responsibility, and not just to the people that are here now, but – you know, I was talking about if I don’t believe time exists, to my ancestors and everything that I’m connected with, that

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<sup>9</sup> Fasting is a traditional ritual and requires one to spend time alone with Creation without food or water for several days in the bush. In this process, one is usually seeking guidance, answers, or renewal.

everything I do affects people not just now, but it affects people in the past and it affects people in the future. It affects people in every alternate reality. And I do believe that. I believe everything that we do, even the things that we think and the things that we say and everything that we do affects everything else, every choice that we make. So I'm trying to be responsible. (Wauzhusk transcript, p. 19)

Wauzhusk also connected motive to having an investment and being accountable to the research produced.

In Graduate Studies, there was a faculty member that taught me qualitative methodologies, who said that we shouldn't have a research topic that was very close to us, because then you'd never finish your study, because you'd be so caught up in trying to get it right and just being really involved with your research that you would never finish. And I totally think the opposite, I totally disagree with him. I think that, how can you do a research study if you're not involved? If you have no stake in the research, why in the hell are you even doing the research? If we do research, it should be somehow related to us, because that's what drives us, that's what motivates us to make it right, to do it right, and to do it to the best of our ability. And if we have no stake in the research, I don't think we should be doing it. And so I don't think non-Aboriginal people should be writing about or doing research studies about Aboriginal issues or Aboriginal peoples, simply because they can do that and then move to Mexico and retire and never think about the issue again because it's not related to them. They don't have to live with it. (Wauzhusk transcript, p. 23)

The reasons why people are interested in their research topics often lie in a memory, where memory and motive, states Hampton (1995a), come before knowledge. Our memories give us knowledge and power to undertake what seems impossible. Research objectives influence research methodologies. Indigenous searchers believe in knowledge for something, for a reason, for a purpose and living a purposeful life. We live in a society that has been blind to the fact that Indigenous people have knowledge, memory, and motive emanating from

philosophical thought, which governs the spiritual, political, social, and economical relationships within nations. In this sense, conscious Indigenous searchers have been specific and direct about their motives.

What follows is a summary of the motives Indigenous searchers in this study articulated for their re-search.

1. To reenact respectful research in our searches with our own people.
2. To empower and emancipate ourselves in order to regain our humanity, restore balance with creation and ultimately live a good life.
3. To advance, support, strengthen, revitalize and restore Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing which create choices for Indigenous researchers to choose Indigenous methodologies as a viable methodological choice in the academy, community, governments or non-governmental organizations.
4. To fulfill family and community obligations when specific requests are presented and the search then becomes a way of giving back and making concrete contributions.

The Indigenous researchers stated our motives are connected to our personal stories and experiences. A concrete example is that Dawn M (2005) dreamt of an integrated healing center and so the transmission of traditional Indigenous knowledge became the focus of her search. Kishebabayquek obliged her father's dying request to finish his stories and distribute them to the family. Indigenous searchers write for Indigenous audiences first because our searches are first to benefit the Indigenous community.

Motive connects to recovering from colonialism. A search for roots then occurs to recover our people, land, languages, cultures and traditions. The journey back home is often a

journey of returning to our roots. Motives are rooted in stories describing a search for identity, group belonging, and knowledge for: who am I, where do I come from, and what do we know? There are a myriad of other possibilities for the roots of Indigenous peoples' searches, but they are most often rooted in our Indigeneity.

### *Search for Congruency*

Searching for theories and methodologies that are in agreement with Indigenous worldviews and philosophies, and preoccupies many Indigenous searchers in developing research proposals and processes. Here the relationship between roots, self and methods becomes apparent. Dawn sets forth one researchers' experience in this search.

[My search] ...was to use theories, methodologies and methods that were congruent with – incorporated the same ways of being (ontologies) ways of knowing (epistemologies) and ways of doing (methodologies) – as those same services. To determine congruency, I called on the knowledge obtained as a person of Ojibway and French ancestry living in Vancouver, the knowledge gleaned from my prior education and literature review, the knowledge gained through prayer and dreaming, and the knowledge acquired by interactions with and feedback by individuals from both the pre-study and research groups of people. (Marsden, 2005, p. 189)

Searching for methodological harmony is a strong methodological consideration for Indigenous searchers. And Missisak stated to me that, “tensions around finding relevant methodologies are apparent” (Missisak transcript, p. 21). Laara Fitznor, in her dissertation, writes about the frustrating experience in searching for congruency because of the absence of exposure to Indigenous methodologies.

My search to look for relevant theories and methods was an experience of frustration, confusion and finally elated upon finding Aboriginal/Indigenous writings as foundational philosophies or ‘teachings’ to support/guide my research process. ... I read many books on how to do qualitative research, I digested some and upchucked a lot because I realized that many of these theories just did not ‘fit’ with who I was/am, who my ‘brothers and sisters’ the participants were/are. I struggled to find those methodologies that seemed to at least be ‘kind’, ‘gentle’,

'trusting', 'inclusive', 'connecting', 'relational' and 'non-intrusive' among other principles. (Fitznor, 2002b, pp. 40 - 41)

The search didn't end there because Laara was persistent in searching for methods that honoured and supported an Indigenous paradigm:

Also, I was mindful that I wanted to find a way to work from paradigms that were grounded in ways that reflected our traditions, perspectives, philosophies, histories, and issues that I could build into this research process. As I struggled through resisting western paradigms and methods of research processes, I realized that there were ways of doing research that honoured the integrity of our Indigenous ways of knowing. (Fitznor, 2002b, p. 55)

Her search for congruency was a search for methodologies that reflect Indigenous worldviews.

Maggie, also shared how her search for congruency began:

There was phenomenology, which I first thought about looking at, which looks at the essence of people's stories, right? But it was coming from a Western epistemology. And even though it was looking at the essence of people's stories, it wasn't giving me good direction as to how, as an Indigenous person, do I use my worldview to go about that journey. So there was no way that I could figure out how to fit in my Indigenous worldview, my Indigenous way of knowing, my Indigenous story, into a methodology that currently existed. So I started working on Indigenous methodologies, "What is it? How does it work?" and that's where my questions grew. So it grew out of a real need to be able to figure out for myself how to do this research in an Indigenous way, how to do it in a good way. (Maggie transcript, p. 10)

The integral relationship between Self and paradigm is once again revealed in the following quote:

Hence, my choice to draw from researchers whose methodologies reflected Aboriginal knowings and processes to make sense of the data from this study. Furthermore, I honour and appreciate the fact that there are now many more Indigenous and Aboriginal researchers who dare to challenge/problematize Western research dominance while asserting our knowledge and ways in research processes. (Fitznor, 2002b, p. 61)

All researchers identified that their search for methods congruent with their Indigeneity, was instrumental to their research methodology. Indigenous congruency, I believe, is essential to the research principles, methodology and ultimately the outcome. Because all of the research topics are explicitly focused on Indigenous experiences, realities, needs and histories, the researchers' search for methodological congruency includes a consideration of factors such as cultural traditions, community, people, relationships, spirit, ownership, oppression, empowerment, traditions, protocols, and decolonizing. These factors became as much a part of the search as was the gathering of data.

When I was growing up in the bush I learnt to search for berries, leaks, mushrooms, and I searched for good rabbit runs to snare rabbits. I located the markers on the land and used those to find my way. Similarly, in our search for congruency in the academy, many of us are trying to find the familiar theories and methods so we can bring our knowledge into different contexts to help us navigate our search for knowledge. Kishebabayquek, in the following quote, talks about her search for congruent ways to include herself in her research:

I'm dreaming and all these things were happening and I know I'm suppose to do this and I just started writing and I included myself in the picture. So I thought one of the ways I thought that I've been taught to write is from myself. I've been taught I'm responsible for the what I do in the world, my words, the ways that I think, the ways that I speak, and I'm responsible for this! So I started writing and at the same time that I was doing that, I was doing this course on qualitative research and then it just struck me...all these theories don't fit and the reason these theories don't fit is that I'm trying to place myself, my family and my community in this nice little box and we don't fit in that nice little box. So then I thought I have to start looking at how do you develop theory? And soon as I had that in my mind...it became easier and it was almost like a door opened and all of a sudden I had to go to the library and I was on the computer. I found all these

articles on developing theory and all the pieces just came together and in Toronto – I kept having these dreams and different things kept happening like I was being guided to that conclusion. (Kiskshekabayquek transcript, pp. 5-8)

We can become gatherers and hunters for knowledge within the academy or other contexts. We find what we need and bring that knowledge and information forward for others.

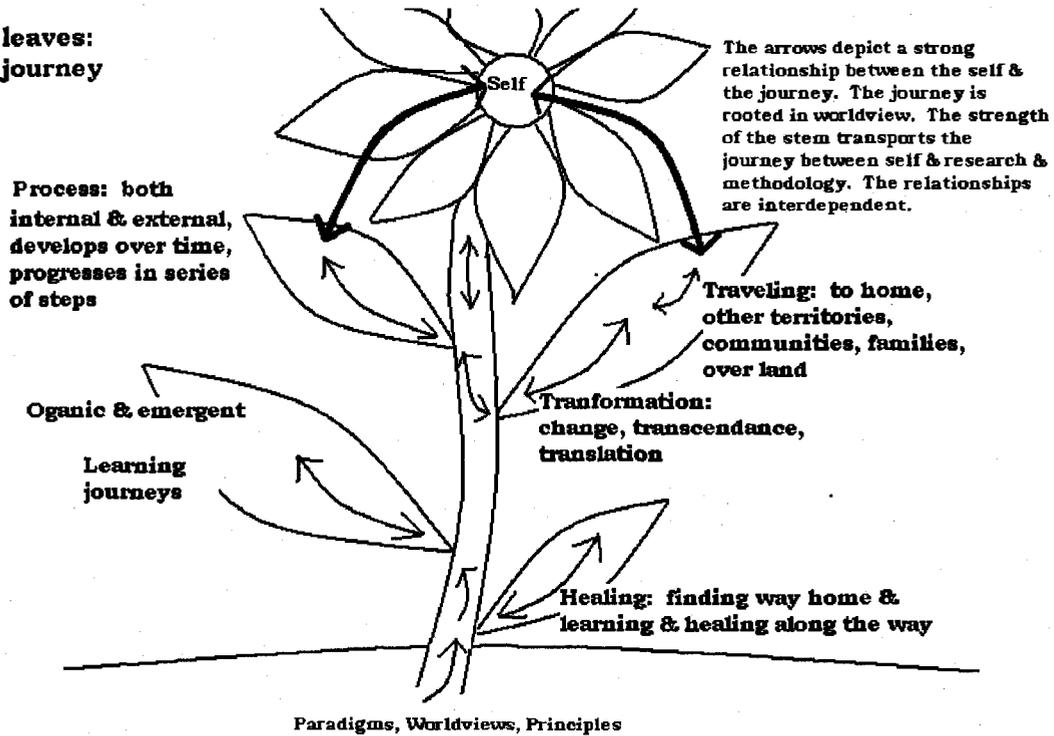
In my search for a culturally appropriate research methodology (a bone needle) about First Nations storytelling, I started with the principle of respect for cultural knowledge embedded in the stories and respect toward the people who owned or shared stories as an ethical guide. (Archibald, 1997, p. 45)

The search for congruency is about transcending contexts. For example, to me research in the academy is analogous to berry picking, hunting or gathering. We go out there and scout the land, walk around, search, find, and gather a basket full of berries. During our searches we climb over rocks, we jump over creeks, we navigate thick bush and we weave our way through lands of knowledge. When we bring our baskets of berries home, we sort and clean them, eat them or turn them into jam, pies or preserves, and find ways to share them. I see that our traditional knowledge is transportable from the bush to the city or to the academy. I have been taught the skills to not get lost and have internalized an ability to identify my landmarks along my journey. My landmarks today appear in other Indigenous scholars and their work and in affirmations from those around me. Their nods of approval tell me I'm on the right path. Feeling good about what I am doing is another marker and my intuition has provided me with the direction I need. Transcendable skills exist for Indigenous researchers that enable us read the academic landscape during our search journeys. When I think about this search as a search for berries, I can find my way and feel myself as a researcher, knowing that I continue to do what my ancestors have done. Gather, hunt and search.

Collecting the knowledge and experiences of Indigenous searchers and gatherers illustrates a powerful need to search for congruency. Indigenous methodological mirrors reinforce and validate a way of knowing, being and doing in ways that make sense when doing Indigenous research in an Indigenous way. If Indigenous searchers accepted the status quo, stayed in the mainstream of western methods and ignored ourselves, all these insights and knowings would be lost. A determination to stay congruent with culture, traditions, historicity, worldview, family and community creates methodologies which reflect an expression of self in the research. The beauty and distinction of our work then is a result of all that each of us carries within. The centre flower and self is acknowledged as integral to Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge. Self as a methodological research tool inevitably implies a journey articulated in the leaves.

**Chapter Eight:  
The Leaves:  
The Journey**

**The leaves:  
The journey**



*K. Absolon, 2007*

**Figure 13. Leaves illustration.**

Photosynthesis occurs in the leaves where the synthesizing of carbon dioxide and water is transformed into nutrients for the plant. The leaves of the flower represent the transformative changing and healing process and journey inherent within Indigenous methodologies. Our research is a learning journey, not always easy and sometimes scary. Raven, in our conversation said:

It's a constant process for me, it's a journey. And some of those things I can't really articulate to you. Because even as we talk about it, I would jump into the process and the process kind of resides within my spirit, in my heart. Even if it's

only taking some time in my day to reflect upon my participants and to reflect upon a particular concept that one of the participants brought forth. You might want to call it data analysis, or I could call it honouring the spirit of that experience. (Raven transcript, p. 25)

Other Indigenous searchers in this study such as Archibald (1997), Cole (2000), Fitznor (2002b), Hill (1995), Hart (1997), McGuire (2003), Marsden (2005), Simpson (1999), and Stevenson (2000) also exemplify transformative processes. The conversations I had with some of these searchers and others such as Maggie, Wauzhusk, Raven, and Eber show that the stories of the research journeys are integral to their methodology, in fact, the essence of their methodology is their process. Willie in our conversation encouraged me to be aware and attend to my process.

### *An Organic Process*

Organic means to emerge naturally. Process involves a progression, a development, a series of steps toward achieving particular goal(s). Process can be a natural series of actions or a planned course of action. It can be clearly defined and determined or nebulous and emergent. Indigenous research methodologies cultivate organic processes which are unplanned, more unpredictable, and natural. Although these researchers had specific research foci and goals, an open-ended process was a large factor in their methodologies. Although unclear processes can make researchers anxious, a certain degree of trust and faith enabled Indigenous researchers in this study to honour their process. Dawn Hill shared that often her agenda or research process wasn't clear from the beginning. The Lubicon, she said, ensured that the process was first directed by them and the academic goals second. This could make some researchers feel conflicted and nervous. Dawn explains,

For over two years, I was unsure of what it was they wanted and, academically, I was becoming nervous about the agenda or research focus. It was not until 1991

that I realized they had an agenda all along. They just didn't tell me what it was.  
(Hill, 1995, p. 30)

The above quote illustrates that process, when community driven, owned and directed, requires the searcher to relinquish some power and control. I believe, it calls for a certain degree of humility. Our worldview is revealed in our ability to trust process when belief in Spirit and ancestors is present. Jo-ann Archibald shares how she attuned to her process and the interdependent relationship between process and principles is revealed.

I have learned from the Elders that beginning with a humble prayer creates a cultural learning process which promotes principles of respect, reverence, responsibility, and reciprocity. These particular principles are inter-woven into my thesis and their meaning in relation to First Nations stories and storytelling will recur in each chapter, taking on meaning with each use. (Archibald, 1997, pp. 1-2)

Oral traditions are process oriented and Indigenous searchers manifest orality in various ways. It was Peter Cole (2000) who said he spoke into his computer as he wrote out his words blending orality with text. He stated he could then feel what he said and hear himself say it. He could then see what he heard as he typed into his computer. He also spoke into his cassette recorder to have conversations with himself about what he was thinking and writing. I, for instance, also speak to myself and I talk to the Creator. I am a runner and I allow the ideas and thoughts to be processed and embodied and while I travel over the land I churn over my thoughts in my head, heart and spirit. Learning is a process and Winona Stevenson acknowledges that infinity of developing understanding and knowledge.

We are a people to whom understanding and knowledge comes by way of relationships-with the Creator, the past, the present, the future, life around us, each other, and from within. And I am here on this earth to learn... Our searches are neither complete nor wholly representational...they are fragmentary pieces...and most acknowledge they are still learning. (Stevenson, 2000, p. 231)

Organic methodology emerges as you attune yourself to your search process. When we listen to our inner knowing, our dreams, the signs around us, and our intuition we become attuned to possibilities that enable an organic process to emerge. For Maggie Kovach, this process was a culmination of dreams, journeying home, a pearl necklace, conversations, and repeatedly sharing her story. This organic emergence is an example of one person's Indigenous methodology. Maggie shared a piece of her story with me which provides a poignant example how her journey home became intrinsic to her methodology.

The methodology came to me in an organic way and not out of a textbook, but out of my own experience and my own feeling of being uncomfortable and reading these different writings by Indigenous people who were saying, "Uh-uh. It's not just here." Like you said, "If you're going to find out about yourself, it's not going to be here in academia. It's going to be out there." And a big thing about the methodology is finding out not just about this objective piece of information that we're going to present to the world that's creating new knowledge, but it's something more connected to who we are as Indigenous people, who we are and what has meaning in our life.

And so what I did was I wanted to talk to people, I wanted to hear other people's stories about research, but I also wanted to capture my own inward knowing and this journey that Indigenous ways of knowing took me on in the past three years. And also what happened as a result of, you know, the dream. It was about a pearl necklace. I was sharing a bit about the pearl necklace and how I was struggling with, – I guess for this to make sense I need to go back and kind of explain my own story of who I am, right? So I'm not too sure how to do this.

Anyway, I was using the metaphor of the white pearl necklace, because when I was a kid I used to wear little pearls for church and – and it was really indicative to me of a very loving, of my White upbringing and the community that I grew up in. I was thinking about a lot of things. I was going back into that medicine bundle, about being adopted. I was thinking about growing up there was a lot of

pain around racism. Even though I had wanted to pay honour to the community that I grew up in, at the same time being the only Indian kid in a White school was really hard. And I experienced racism. And so I was thinking about all of this and I was thinking about really painful stuff. And I started to smoke, lost eight pounds in a six week period, which is just not me. I wasn't sleeping. I was reading stuff and I would start crying. I was in a really emotional place. And I was writing, just writing really. Writing from my heart. And so I go up and I just said, "Monty, let's go for a drive. I just need to get out of here." And it was a really beautiful Sunday afternoon. So we went out, we go to the car, and he gets in his side, and I go to my side and there's a pearl necklace. This pearl necklace is hanging from the door handle on my side of the car. And I was just like—we were both stunned, right? I don't want to say it was coincidence because I don't think it necessarily was. I think the universe was giving me a sign.

I knew I had to go home and I knew I had to just be here to write my paper. I knew I had to look into seeing about, learning a little bit about the language. I knew that I needed to be with people, family, both of my families. And I just needed to be home, you know? I wasn't thinking that I needed to come home and necessarily be more than I am in terms of coming home and really trying to engage in ceremony or I just needed to be under the sky. I just needed to see the flatlands. I just needed to see the mothers and siblings, nieces and nephews. I just needed to be here. And I came home.

But that wasn't part of my methodology, that wasn't part of my method. Even when I started thinking about Indigenous methodologies, it wasn't a part of it. It just organically emerged as I was going through this process. (Maggie transcript, pp. 14-22)

In Maggie's story, the process emerges and facilitates a transformation. Raven said that the process resides in the spirit and in the heart. I really liked that. In this sense, the process of attuning to protocols, ethics, and principles guide the methodology.

### *Traveling*

Process inevitably involves traveling. The traveler: who / what is the traveler? Is it you or me? Is it our language, our ways, our knowledge, stories, or our cultural tools. Is it me, you, others? The traveler can be a rock, stone, spirit, minds, bodies, drums, feathers, word and in this case, the words found within the texts and the words of the voices – they are all travelers. Our voices, words, conversations, thoughts journey from spirit, heart, mind and body into this thesis to bring whatever meaning, representation, and knowing can be derived through the journey of the words. They are traveling journeys. Indigenous methodologies include stories of who is doing the searching and the stories of their journey along the learning path. I really liked the way Winona began her dissertation, which begins with a sense of a new journey. In writing about herself, she says:

She let go of her acreage, sold off the chickens, and gave away the dogs to embark on this PhD program. But she really didn't want to go. Too much work to be done at home – outstanding land claims, watch-dogging federal policy initiatives, the student funding crisis – so many needs and not enough people to do all the work at the best of times. She'd already done two White degrees and really ought to be going back to the bush to pick up her Cree and study more seriously with the Old People. So few of them left. Just couldn't justify the luxury of two years, 2,000 miles south in the land of no winters, for another degree. And for what? Who would really benefit anyway? Done just fine up till now without it. Besides, she was scared. (Stevenson, 2000, p. 2)

The journey we embark upon to search for knowledge is a journey that often begins with inner conflict about leaving community to learn in the big White institution and this journey is sometimes criticized and / or supported by our own people. This journey is full of struggles between the polarities and dualities that we experience from those around us and from within ourselves. It may include physical travel or not.

Dawn Hill's dissertation involved journeys and traveling to South Dakota and into Alberta. And during those journeys Dawn had organized meetings with Elders and Chiefs, and

held ceremonies. They also deliberated, she said, for many hours over their course of action or directions to pursue. Dawn wrote about seeing eagles and how they were a sign for them, the preparations for sweat lodge and pipe ceremonies and the community of people who all cooperated to do the work that they were being directed to do. She talked of the power of the sweat lodge ceremony, the northern lights and sitting with the ancestors after a sweat. Dawn reminds us that being in the community is better because that's where the voices of the people reside. It was important for her to have a community presence. The Chief also told Dawn that being in the community is better. One of her criticisms from her literature review on the Lubicon, was that the voices of the people were generally absent and the researchers who wrote about the Lubicon had not visited Little Buffalo or spent any amount of time within the community and with its people.

I spent as much time with the people as possible. Young and old, everyone had important voices. From the Lubicon and my perspective, this is the contribution of our study. Only the Lubicon could articulate what impact the destruction of the land had and continues to have on them. (Hill, 1995, p. 35)

Traveling into peoples' homelands and into their homes to be in their contexts reestablishes their power base within the research process (Rice, 2003). Jo-ann shares coffee and stories while meeting a prominent Elder in her home:

I met Ellen White in the Spring of 1991, but I knew about her long before that... When I arrived, Ellen had made salmon chowder and bannock. As we ate, Doug and I teased each other about who drank the strongest coffee – me from the Sto:los or him from the Nanaimo Coast Salish. In a way we're related by the Lalq'emeylem language, although Ellen's community has dialectical differences. They call their language, Hul'qumi'num. We come from the same cultural traditions. I felt accepted and at home there; I felt like a member of their extended family. Before we began working, I offered Ellen White a Starblanket as a gift from the First Nations House of Learning, to thank her for helping us with this important work. (Archibald, 1997, p.84)

Enacting the role and power of oral traditions and the strength of the language are methodology in itself (Colorado, 1988; Deloria, 1996; Hermes, 1998; Young, 2003). Indigenous languages are very descriptive and action or process oriented (Little Bear, 2000). The awareness of Indigenous languages and oral traditions attunes a conscious searcher to attend to oral process. In other spaces in this thesis I reiterate, circle processes or circle talk as manifestations of oral tradition and Indigenous ways of coming to know (Graveline, 2000; Hart, 1996; P. Steinhauser, 2001; TeHennepe, 1997; Weenie, 1998). A circle process can take you on a transformative journey where engagement, involvement, and presence are requisites. Humility in process reflects an inward journey and an attunement to that journey within the collective circle. Consistently, Indigenous researchers to honour their journey strive to apply their own cultural protocols such as offering of tobacco, gift giving, integrating (where comfortable) ceremony.

Our journeys are also rich with cultural knowledge, people, sharing, learning and experiencing active processes. Peter Cole (2000) presents a truly inspiring search journey and represents his journey through a canoe metaphor. He gets in and out of the canoe as he describes his travels across the lands, waters, and oceans and his conversations with people along the way. The journey of our searches is not that unfamiliar to me, in terms of traveling and going here and there with my family. My ancestors traveled by canoe through the rivers and lakes of Northern Ontario. We take many journeys: the journey of the thesis; the personal journey; the writing journey; the making meaning journey; the gathering journey of meeting people and having conversations; and the journey with our families along the way. The swoosh of the canoe resonated with my spirit and I remembered that navigating the channels of the academy, is akin to navigating challenging river channels. Our ancestors negotiated choppy waters, as will we. The motives, process, learning, and meaning in the journey makes it worthwhile.

### *Transformation*

Undoubtedly, Indigenous processes are transforming. Everyone talked about ‘process’ and the journey of their dissertations. They all inspired me to think about Indigenous ways of knowing and the processes involved. I felt supported to acknowledge my own dream work and ceremonies. I turned inward for guidance when I needed direction. The research journey was described by Indigenous researchers as transformative for people and this transformation began within self. Indigenous based knowledge quests can be life altering and unforgettable. When the spirit is invited into the search, the essence of this search moves to another level of faith, trust, and process. In Indigenous cultural contexts, we are taught to search for knowledge in the spirit realm. The process of learning how to do this requires personal commitment, sacrifice and a will to engage beyond the physical. Processes exist that prepare you to be with spirit and when we seek knowledge with humility and clear intentions the spirit might start to reveal answers through those sacred ways. This deep spiritual involvement and transformation is especially important and contradicts the logic and reason in hegemonic Eurocentric academies. We need to resist and transcend this hegemony by becoming aware of it and engaging to actively bring an authentic Indigenous presence and contribution! Dr. Taiaiake Alfred describes the “most important role for Indigenous academics: as teachers of an empowering and truthful sense of the past and who we are as peoples, and as visionaries of a dignified alternative to the indignity of cultural assimilation and political surrender” (2007, p. 23). Resistance is a subtext to the journey; resistance to being silenced, rendered invisible, insignificant, uncivilized, inhuman, non-existent, and inconsequential. This resistance means we are “committed to integrating traditional knowledge and bringing an authentic community voice” to our work (Alfred, 2007, p. 23). Transforming the injustices that our ancestors endured, motivates Indigenous researchers to continue to challenge, confront, preserve, defy, resist, remember, reclaim, rename and work

toward the rights and recognition of Indigenous peoples of this land. Not only do we transform ourselves through our research, we participate in transforming the academy. A responsibility articulated by Dr. Taiaiake Alfred and other Indigenous academic warriors cited in this thesis.

The journey of gathering Indigenous knowledge requires tools of translation because Indigenous concepts become translated into English written text. Translating Indigenous language and concepts into English requires bicultural skills and knowledge. Some researchers state that speaking an Aboriginal language is essential and only through the language will you acquire a true sense of the meaning of what is being shared (Michell, 1999; L. T. Smith, 2000; Wa Thiong'o, 1986; Young, 2003). Fluent speakers say that meaning is lost when translating Anishinaabe concepts to English which is not surprising because the English language did not grow from an Anishinaabe cultural worldview or epistemology. However, I believe that we must work with what we have, and do the best we can without perpetuating guilt or shame for the loss of language among our peoples. All of the searchers in the gathering addressed their perception of language. Whether a person is a fluent speaker or not, language is a significant issue in terms of translation of experiences, terms, concepts, and philosophies. This must be a methodological consideration for Indigenous searchers.

New forms of English emerge as Indigenous peoples develop Indigenous concepts using English. Wa'Thiongo (1986) would say that to combat the contradiction of speaking the colonizers language we must commit to learning our own mother tongue and speak it with pride. He would say that we must tell our stories in our own language and find ways of recording them in script without compromising their cultural origins. Breaking the rules of language and creating a new language forges another level of resistance to colonialism. Indigenous English is a form of English that includes Indigenous phrases and perspectives; it morphs classic English

into something that the non-Indigenous audience may not recognize or relate to, but is understandable to the Indigenous audience. Translating language can be more reflective of a hybrid of English and Anishinaabe worldviews. Coles' (2000) dissertation is one of a few pieces where I have seen the translations and morphing of Indigenous concepts into English. He makes up words, creates a language and blends words together. To me, his terms make sense in providing terminology to describe ludicrous, insane, ironic, painful, outrageous and chaotic experiences, events, and actions. For example, he calls it "...Anti-colonial isomorphing of stories and epistemologies from indigenous language into English and back" (Cole, 2000, p. iii). On the idea of perpetuating myths he says:

using the racist term "mythology" "myth" and "mythic"  
 well they are myhtaken we have no myths we have only stories  
 (Cole, 2000, p. 57)

In Peter's dissertation, there are many examples of morphing language to critique and ridicule colonialism.

Indigenous methodologies raise Indigenous voices out of suppression. Voices are sounded and the words in the peoples' stories are heard. Conveying Indigenous knowledge, stories and experiences in English means creating a language and a discourse that captures Indigenous perspectives. Indigenous scholars are contextualizing English within Indigenous paradigms and experiences by using English in creative and diverse forms through works of poetry, prose, storytelling and creating Indigesh (Indigenous English). Indigenous researchers such as Peter Cole, Winona Stevenson and myself talk about creating an 'Indian english' to aid in the articulation of Indigenous peoples experiences and worldviews.

As we attempt to translate some concepts into English, we tend to use verbs and lengthy descriptions. The Anishinaabe language is very descriptive it takes conscious thought and effort

to articulate an Anishinaabe concept in English. A small example is the term for a heat bug in Anishinaabe translates roughly in English to mean it is 'singing for the berries to ripen'. Or window in Anishinaabe translates roughly in English to mean 'where the light shines through'. Our language in English becomes very descriptive and our thought processes as we write also become descriptive. Winona in our gathering articulated these issues quite well. Miigwech translates roughly to express thanks for all that we are given and a hand gesture accompanies that word. Translation of language and concepts is challenging and some concepts and terms cannot be translated because they are contextual and would become decontextualized if translated. In other cases, I'm told, that there are no English words to describe some Anishinaabe concepts and vice versa. For example, there is no word for 'goodbye' in Anishinaabe. The concept does not exist because in an Anishinaabe worldview we say 'see you later' or 'see you around', indicating that we will meet again sometime – a cyclical worldview is reinforced. Worldview is connected to knowledge translation and context is an essential element to translation. Dawn Marsden highlights that for Indigenous researchers, translation of some concepts and language becomes a strategic decision weighing issues of meaning, context and ethics.

### ***Healing***

Only a few researchers such as Jo-ann, Maggie, Dawn and Michael, explicitly talked about their research journey as healing. However, those discussions were strong enough to acknowledge. I believe that healing is also implied through methodological concepts of reconnection, remembering, learning, recovering and reclaiming. In a sense, healing is woven throughout. Indigenous research becomes a healing journey when what you gather helps you to recover and heal a part of your own self, life, family, community, knowledge, culture, language, and so on. Indigenous searching is healing as it invokes restoration, repatriation, reclaiming,

recovering, and relearning. It is about healing wounded spirits, hearts, minds, and bodies. Indigenous methodologies facilitate healing individuals, families, communities, and nations. Knowledge searches have facilitated a healing from postcolonial trauma and residential school atrocities. Research aids in healing from the dispossession of our homeland. Indigenous knowledge is healing through the use of our own culture, traditions, language, and knowledge. Methodological congruency with Indigenous history, peoples, culture, worldview, and experiences is about healing and making whole what has been fragmented, severed and wounded.

Indigenous knowledges and methodologies hold the key to our healing particularly in spiritually based methodologies such as ceremony, prayer, healing lodges, and sweats. Circle processes can heal and restore relationships. Our journeys are not just about academic knowledge, they are about our journeys home, our journeys to our communities, to our ancestors, to our territories, to other territories, and to our families. Returning home can be healing as Indigenous searchers' motives are about cultural identity, learning and healing. About her journey home, Maggie shared the following in a reflective softly spoken voice and it was beautiful to hear:

I remember Monty and I, we were with family and afterward he said to me, "You're different here than in BC." And, you know, we were just laughing and I said, "Well, what do mean different?" And he goes, "No, you're different here. It really shows." And I said, "Okay, well?" And he goes, "You're kinder here. You're connected to family. You're connected to people, you're kinder, you're not so much a lone wolf," which is very healing for me to hear. To come here has been really healing, to know that I don't have to know everything, I don't have to be fluent in Cree, I don't have to have been raised on the rez and participating in ceremonies from day one. I don't have to do that. What I do need is a commitment to just learn more, just to be present in the culture and that it's okay

to be who I am and where I'm at. And, you know, the methodology, for me it's about – it has no time. It will be with me. And that's something that I think – yeah. How do you write that? (Maggie transcript, p. 25)

The searching journey is just as much about being Indigenous as it is about collecting information and knowledge. Indigenous researchers have generously shared aspects of their research journeys with healing undeniably being a part of that process. The Elders and people we meet along our journey can have positive impacts:

I recalled the good healing kind of emotion I felt after bringing Simon home. He provided me with good things to think about. He had soothed my anxiety. He had also pointed out some markers that I could place on my “journeying” map, to act as bearings” to help me find my way as I began to explore the territory of First Nations orality. (Archibald, 1997, p. 75)

Maggie in her doctoral research shared that the journey opened up doorways and portals for her that facilitated her reconnection to her land and family, which were healing for her:

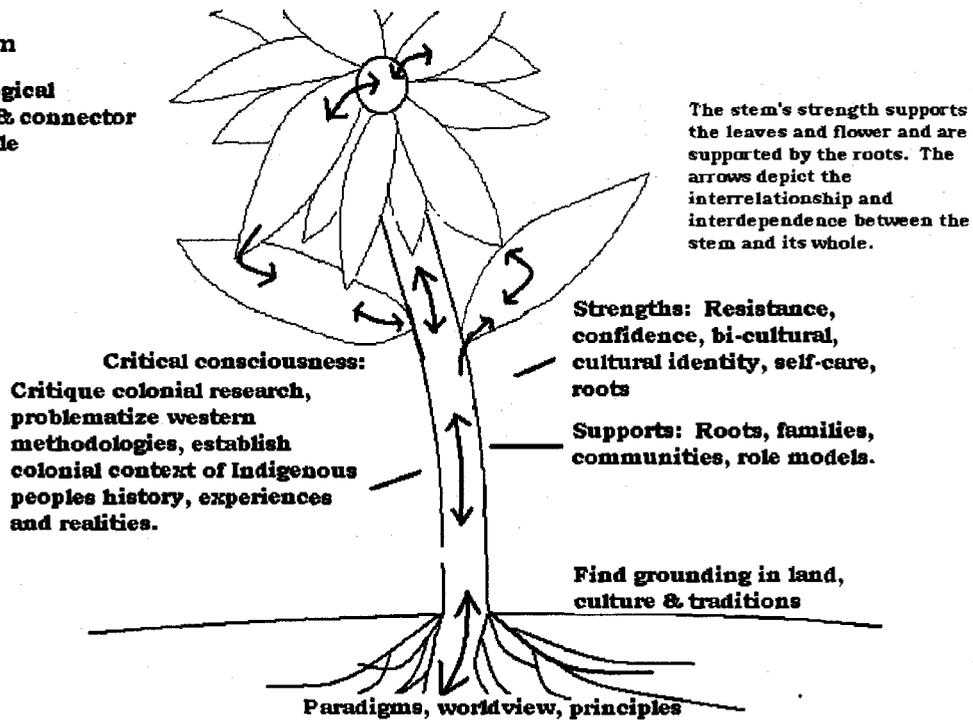
I started [this process] with thinking I had to know this all or I couldn't do it. That's what my meltdown was about, initially, that I felt I didn't know enough about my culture. I wasn't Indian enough, so I couldn't go on this journey. And what's been really healing about this journey, in talking to people, is that this is just the beginning of my learning. This is like a portal. We talked about portals. This is like a doorway. This PhD has been like a doorway for me to learn more about my Indigenous ancestry, about what it means to be a Cree woman. You know those sorts of things and what it means to be a Saulteaux woman. And so that's the real gift, because it isn't going to stop when I write up the project and hand it in. It's something that I have for the rest of my life. And I mean I think that's the beauty about it as well, that the possibilities of an Indigenous methodology is that it will open doors for you that you never realized could be opened and that it will be with you for long after when the project's over. (Maggie transcript, p. 41)

Most people referred to their search as a journey or learning path, but mainly a journey that was challenging at the personal, emotional, spiritual and mental levels of being. These journeys have evidenced a certain degree of tenacity or backbone within Indigenous searchers. The next section locates the stem of the flower which is where the methodological backbone is situated.

**Chapter Nine:  
The Stem:  
Backbone and Supports**

**The Stem**

**Methodological backbone & connector of the whole**



K. Absolon, 2007

**Figure 14. Stem illustration.**

Sitting in the forest observing creation, I realized that the stems of plants are their backbone or spine. Strength resides in the stem and it supports the flower and provides the channel for the flow of nutrients to and from the roots and leaves and centre flower and petals and holds everything together. Conscious Indigenous researchers enter the academy with a strong backbone and in this dissertation it characterizes the critical and bi-cultural consciousness necessary to persevere and succeed in using Indigenous methodologies in the academy. The strengths Indigenous searchers draw on to provide this backbone include a critical consciousness,

internal resources and community supports. These, I believe are what enable Indigenous researchers to employ Indigenous methodologies in an academic context. They are highlighted in this chapter and are the capacities of Indigenous researchers. Chapter eleven further explores the experiences of Indigenous researchers employing Indigenous methodologies in an academic environment. The emphasis here is on acknowledging the stem / backbone of Indigenous researchers themselves.

A critical consciousness was unanimously evidenced among conscious Indigenous scholars. In the academy, the research journey is burdened by the dominance of eurowestern ways of knowing. Identifying our supports is essential to remaining grounded to our values and beliefs as we search and gather. The academic and educational context vigilantly plays its part in acculturating, assimilating and annihilating Indigenous culture, identity, traditions and wisdoms from existence. Indigenous knowledge sets are perceived and received with antagonism and I agree with Michael Marker (2004), when he says that “the efforts to make education serve the status quo have often made the place based knowledge and identity of Indigenous people seem like an antiquated and sometimes contentious perspective” (Marker, 2004, p. 102). All searchers reveal that one essential methodological backbone of Indigenous researchers doing conscious Indigenous searches in the academy is a critical consciousness.

### ***Critical Consciousness***

The systems of knowledge production and its dissemination in the West has vestiges of influence from a history of colonialism and imperialism. These vestiges of colonialism translate as appropriation and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge in the modern context. Current waves of research projects from Western institutions, under global economic auspices, threaten to continue the appropriation and exploitation of Indigenous Peoples’ intellectual and cultural property. Confronting these neo-colonial practices requires a broad and protracted process of conscientization about research ethics, cultural imperialism, and the protection of Indigenous Peoples’ knowledge. (Ermine, 2000, p. v)

All of the research projects I reviewed critique the failure of Western methodologies to reflect the strengths of the community, culture and / or the traditions of Indigenous peoples. All of the researchers insisted on the need to critically address eurowestern research theory, methodology and ethics. We need to ensure that our research methodologies include critical analysis of the histories of Indigenous – white relations, the construction of knowledge and power and sociohistoric truth (Duran & Duran, 2000). Establishing a critical understanding unveils the oppressive nature and intent of research with Aboriginal people and critiques the old orders of scientific empiricism which are based on positivist paradigms. Critically conscious Indigenous searchers see Indigenous peoples searches in the historical and current colonial context. Eber Hampton, in our conversation stated:

We have to start with the colonialism, with the attack on our identity – everything. That's the first step to creating that ground that you were talking about. Oh geeze how come every time I sit down to write something I gotta moan and groan about the atrocities that have been done to us, you know...pisses me off... I know it's like I end up doing that and in a way it's like clearing the air – establishing my perspective, my take on the world. A lot of it has to do with that colonial experience and for me to acknowledge that up front seems necessary. (Eber transcript, p. 18)

This means that we critique and problematize Eurowestern research theories and question their reliability in Indigenous contexts. Willie Ermine's thesis establishes a strong critique of eurowestern research. In our conversation, Willie talked about community contexts of knowledge production and eloquently questioned bringing Indigenous knowledge into academic settings that refuse to recognize and respect that knowledge. He sees the western system as underdeveloped in comparison to Cree knowledge systems.

In my masters education I've gone to look at Western culture and what it's all about and how come it doesn't recognize or accept Cree being. What makes it so narcissistic? So I came full circle back to the community. I see Western people as little children. They're still growing. The wisdom and agedness coming from the Cree world are not respected by the little children. They don't know enough. How can we interact with children or more underdeveloped children? I see university institutions and Western systems are just children developing these processes and so I have a fundamental problem with approaching Cree thought in a way that is trying to subsume that thought in a Western paradigm. (Willie transcript, p. 4)

When Indigenous searchers enter the academy to do their research, Willie says, communities miss out on the development of our own forms of knowledge production. And when Indigenous peoples attempt to develop Indigenous forms of knowledge within the academy it is marginalized by the theories and methods of western science. Similarly, Leanne Simpson, in her dissertation says:

Indigenous Knowledge is constantly being measured by the western yard stick.... If you want your knowledge to be legitimate in this society, you have to prove it is legitimate on western terms, using the western knowledge system. This is not only epistemologically unsound, it is also racist. (Simpson, 1999, p. 62)

Colonizing systems of knowledge production must be critically reviewed. Paradoxically, we can't dismantle colonized forms of knowledge production using colonial methodologies, we need both to develop a critique and then turn our gaze toward Indigenous tools and knowledge.

Critiques of colonialism in research historically and currently are paramount in contextualizing Indigenous research today. We must make our oppressions visible and tell the stories of how the intellectual authority powerhouses try to shapeshift us into eurowesterner thinkers and reproducers of their worldviews and paradigms. We must unveil, and reveal those experiences and stories of the academy's attempts to silence, reshape, mould our unique creative works of

intelligence, art, compilations into 'something understandable' and something colonized. We are observed, recorded, analyzed, synthesized, managed, organized, categorized, and then problematized and pathologized. How dare the academy force colonial methods into our searches.

Dawn Hill (1995) like others, critically acknowledged that western science has been used to assert, justify, and perpetuate colonial oppression. These are necessary first steps toward uncovering Indigenous wisdoms.

Post-colonial intellectuals are beginning to rethink, reconstruct, and revise ethnocentric social scientific paradigms. The ontological has given way to the epistemological. Monopolies of truth are crumbling as more and more Native, African, Asians, and women begin to enter the Western intelligentsia. The post-colonial era of social science is a reflection of the current political and social reality. Social agents of the "other" kind are inquiring into the subjective, biases, and ethnocentric assumptions make about "them"....

The Western yardstick used to measure all "others" is beginning to reveal its ethnocentricity. Development, industrialization, and technology—all formerly considered signs of advancement of a civilized society—are beginning to be revealed as destructive forces which endanger all life forms, not just Natives. Some scientists are turning to Indigenous wisdom to raise the consciousness of Western people and their institutions...

The theoretical crisis in anthropology, or in the social sciences in general, is developing around the issues of resistance, representation, authority, textuality, analysis, and post-colonialism. (Hill, 1995, pp. 39-40)

Dawns' critical literature review on the historical representation of the Lubicon reveals misrepresentations and a blatant absence of the voices of the people. Colonizing anthropological research, she points out, omits the real stories and voices of the people. To counter the omissions she focuses on Indigenous sciences asserting that they are an initial tenet to Indigenous methodologies. In essence, Dawn Hill, like other critical Indigenous researchers includes the cultural and colonial analysis of resistance within the search.

Indigenous scholars have developed ongoing critiques and dismantling of colonial research motives, theories and methods (Duran & Duran, 2000; Ross, 2005; L. T. Smith, 2000; Talbot, 2002). Luana Ross (2005) asserts, “We need to deconstruct old, tired methodologies. As researchers we have an obligation to rework methodologies with various worldviews and unequal power structures in mind” (p. 60). Critical reflections and discourse set a pathway for freedom to be attained without replicating or empowering colonialism and Eurocentric hegemony (Alfred, 2005). Maori scholars Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Russell Bishop (1998b) have made invaluable contributions to the Indigenous critique of colonial research. Bishop (1998b) identifies a Kaupapa Maori approach as “the philosophy and practice of being and acting Maori” p. 201. Kaupapa Maori is the operationalization of self-determination, is collectivist (not individualistic), and assumes the social, political, historical, intellectual and cultural safety and legitimacy of Maori people (Bishop, 1998b; L. T. Smith, 2000). This involves a commitment to a critical analysis of the existing unequal power structures, a rejection of hegemonic belittling, and a commitment to consciousness raising and politicization. Kaupapa Maori also means accessing, defining and protecting knowledge that existed before European arrival and validates this cultural knowledge. Maori research is epistemologically based within Maori culture (L. T. Smith, 2000). The two following quotations from Russell Bishop (1998) illustrate these two necessary elements of Maori Indigenous knowledge creation. The first quote, in his academic voice, speaks to the presence and commitment of maintaining congruency with cultural knowledge.

One fundamental understanding to a Kaupapa Maori approach to research is that it is the discursive practice that is Kaupapa Maori that positions researchers in such a way to operationalize self-determination (agentic positioning and behavior) for research participants. This is because the cultural aspirations, understandings, and practices of Maori people implement and organize the research process. (p. 202)

Whereas the second quote speaks to the necessity of developing a critical analysis:

Such understandings challenge traditional ways of defining, accessing, and constructing knowledge about indigenous peoples and the process of self-critique, sometimes termed paradigm shifting, that is used by Western scholars as a means of “cleansing” thought and attaining what becomes their version of the “truth.” Indigenous peoples are challenging this process because it maintains control over the research agenda within the cultural domain of the researchers or their institutions. (p. 202)

By virtue of researching in academic corridors, we explicitly navigate two knowledge sets. Willie, in our conversation, elaborates on the tensions Indigenous people experience when they are critically conscious and choose to enter academic contexts to research Indigenous knowledge and communities.

Now what do you think? You come from a community and developing that community knowledge in different contexts. Think of that community as a living organism of its own. It needs certain things for it to function. The collective / community is one context. Language is another context. You’re doing this in a universal language and it’s not a universal language. The context of that organism is that there’s a certain language that belongs there. Using someone else’s language to describe that organism is a language out of context. The oral tradition is very process oriented. People have to be active for the oral tradition to survive. In the western context everything is written. In the Cree context, the oral tradition and where I see community – it has to be a process. It’s like the heartbeat. The oral tradition is a process and it needs active participants to keep moving. It needs a community. That process of that energy and anything that makes that community function as a community – as a Cree group – is dependent on people contributing to that and within that context. That has to be there to understand the functioning of everything, the interconnection and interdependence. That’s context! (Willie transcript, p. 6)

And while Indigenous researchers and critical authors echo that research for and by Indigenous people is needed (McPherson & Rabb, 2001), clearing the mind of colonial constructs, alone is not enough. Decolonization is the common descriptor for unlearning out of racism and colonization and relearning and recovering Indigeneity (Calliou, 2001; Fitznor, 2002a; Graveline, 2004; Simpson, 2001). Contextualization requires an integration of the critique of colonialism and the domination of traditional research in the process of conceptualizing and mapping out our own research methodologies (Bishop, 1998b; Fitznor, 2002a). Cora Weber-Pillwax (2001) says that you must contextualize yourself and own the location from which you research. Consequently, Indigenous researchers must know their history and the role that history has played (Kenny, 2000).

Critically navigating western knowledge sets implies that critically conscious Indigenous researchers first present their critiques of colonialism, history, imperialism and eurowestern empirical research methodology. We have to start with colonialism to establish the context of our searches. Because of colonialism, much of the articulation of Indigenous perspectives, epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies is compromised and left underdeveloped because of the need to establish positionality and justify Indigenous perspectives before presenting the narratives or stories. For example, Winona Stevenson's' dissertation (2000) presents a critical encounter with Euro western hegemony and illustrates a strong case for oral history research from Indigenous ways of being and Indigenous worldviews. She states:

Charging that mainstream historical literature "imprisons Indian history" through the silencing of Indigenous perspectives and voices, and "by the rhetoric and scholarly inventions of empire" Native American scholars argue for a new articulation of Indigenous scholarship grounded in tribal intellectual traditions. (Stevenson, 2000, p. 11)

The stories are limited in their presentation because so much time has to be spent countering Eurowestern hegemony. Winona presents a critique of post-colonialism, post-modernism and states that Indigenous scholars are expected to meet two standards: that of the university and that of their communities and inevitably, at times they conflict. In another example, Patricia McGuire (2003) is talking about narrative life history and her fathers manuscript on the life of the Anishinaabek Metis. After reading through a third of the thesis, I was still waiting to get a taste of the stories. Dawn Hill (1995) felt conflicted between the academic need for a research design prior to her project and the Lubicon peoples' way of doing. Her process became the 'Lubicon way' of doing because the Lubicon people resisted verbalizing what "collaborative" research would look like, and insisted on showing rather than telling. These scholars echo other Indigenous scholars in meeting the challenges of navigating both academic and Indigenous community demands.

As Indigenous searchers navigate dual agendas, the channels become narrower and more challenging. We not only have the responsibility to present our findings and knowledge in the most respectful and authentic manner possible, but we also have to establish our context, argue for our methodology and expect cynicism on its validity, and then present it both to the academic and Indigenous audiences.

The Indigenous scholar's position at the confluence of worldviews is crucial in the work required to assert and realign perspectives about Indigenous Peoples and their knowledge. Developing and disseminating Indigenous Peoples' perspectives about society and knowledge is crucial in advancing not only critique, but also in developing new forms of knowledge. (Ermine, 2000, p. v)

Indigenous and academic perspectives differ on both methodology and research agenda.

Indigenous searchers, through their research, support claims that Indigenous methodologies are concrete. The efforts to create a discourse on the articulation of Indigenous methodologies

challenge myths that Indigenous methods are unsystematic. Raven was very passionate about being an active ‘myth buster’ when she expressed the following:

Indigenous research methodology isn’t just kind of ‘willy-nilly’ eclectic approach, because there’s that foundation or the philosophy that it draws upon and that’s – depending on what nation you’re from, those are very, very clear. There’s no ifs, ands, or buts about that, like in terms of what’s protocol. This is very clear. And it’s quite universal. At least ethical reciprocity is universal in Indigenous cultures, we know that. So it’s dispensing away with that myth. And that it actually makes it harder, because it can’t be approached, this research endeavour, from just a cognitive academic frame, intellectual frame of mind. I have to be holistic, so I have to consider things like spirit and emotion. (Raven transcript, p. 38)

Patricia McGuire makes the important point that ethnography has typically been to guide outsider researchers when studying another culture, however when we are searching within our own cultural paradigms we need to follow our own cultural guidelines and experiences in our own social world (McGuire, 2003). Indigenous researchers here represent the duality and challenge of searching from an Indigenous worldview within a colonial eurowestern context. Needing to present our critiques and justifications for doing Indigenist research compromises space to present what we want the dissertation to actually be about.

Hopefully, one day we will be able to move directly into our knowledge searches using whatever Indigenous methodologies fit the context. Currently though, critiques are still a necessary part of the process. Dawn Hill states this when she says

[b]efore I can make room for “our” voices to tell this story I must engage in a non-Native academic dialogue to simply get to “our point.” I will do this for the sake of the dominant institutions for whom I write, so you understand why this is not relevant to “our” discourse. (Hill, 1995, p. 41)

Being critical of the master in the masters’ house is risky business. Critically conscious Indigenous scholars are critiquing colonial academic structures and forms of knowledge

production in the very setting where we are conducting our searches. Inevitably we will be perceived as antagonistic and threatening to the academic status quo. We knowingly bring a critically conscious mind and presence into the academy. As such we enter the academy with a consciousness of our roles and responsibilities.

### *The Role of Critically Conscious Indigenous Scholars*

Dawn Marsden describes Indigenous researchers in the academy as 'shapeshifters', both within our research methodology and within the academy. It seemed appropriate to begin this section with a discussion on the critical role of Indigenous scholars because they all identified that their research and methodology was an important part of their presence in the academy. And our presence in the academy is felt and experienced by those around us. Conscious Indigenous researchers and research have a profound impact on the academy and are contributing to changes in curriculum, research methodology, programming, scholarship and faculty.

Critically conscious Indigenous scholars have a role to play in developing the conditions required for appropriate research discourses and transformational programming in educational institutions. Indigenous scholars are perhaps in the best position to chart the appropriate pathways to emancipating and transforming knowledge. The critical Indigenous scholar can readily occupy the ethical space that is characterized as the confluence of two worldviews. (Ermine, 2000, p. 120)

We are both Indigenous and scholarly. Our research, within the academy, coins us as scholars. Without question, the academic environment holds burdens and responsibilities for critically conscious Indigenous scholars. Peter Cole, stated in his dissertation that as First Nations, our responsibilities are to factor in accountability, not just measurability, of our relations with all of Creation and to follow our original instructions as they were orally passed on. Today we are challenged to continually relearn ceremonies, languages, and to regenerate

mutual relationships by Indigenizing methodologies. Our awareness of our place in Creation is our responsibility. Indigenous frameworks are ethical and spiritual considerations and the codes of conduct are those guidelines provided to us by the Creator (Cole, 2000). We have a responsibility to own the history and knowledge that is ours and use our methods to retrieve and communicate them.

I am talking about first people writing our own contact stories (if we choose to) rather than sharing ours with people who want to make a name for them / selves who want to become 'experts' on this or that 'tribe'. (Cole, 2000, p. 65)

In owning our knowledge, we have a responsibility to acknowledge the history and roots of our teachings, or the origins of our accumulated knowledge. Many Indigenous researchers in this study acknowledged those leaders and mentors who have tenaciously asserted Indigenous knowledge and / or methodologies in their search for knowledge. Acknowledging our mentors, teachers, and leaders is an important practice. Dawn Marsden, in her dissertation and in our conversation refers to this as the genealogy of our knowing. Laara Fitznor (2002) acknowledged leaders such as Pam Colorado, Russell Bishop, Jean Fyre Graveline, and Verna Kirkness for the paths that they have forged which enabled her to continue to integrate Indigenous knowledge and process in her search.

These leaders demonstrated leadership about how research is thought about and conducted for, and by, Aboriginal / Indigenous peoples. This was a relief for me as an Aboriginal scholar conducting this piece of research because I struggled with mismatched Western ways of taking up research on Aboriginal peoples. I did not want to repeat processes that might dishonour our relations. (Fitznor, 2002b, p. 61)

The Indigenous scholars whose theses I read and who I conversed with are my mentors and have provided me with the leadership, strength and vision to continue to champion Indigenous ways of searching as legitimate means. We have a role to reinvest some of our energies into rebuilding Indigenous resources and knowledge and Willie, in his thesis stated:

This may mean enacting the responsibility of researchers to research their own communities to find their resources for healing and transformation. It may also mean making researchers available for the benefit of Indigenous communities and other marginalized peoples that have experienced the full violence of colonialism and nevertheless have maintained the vision of the possible. (Ermine, 2000, p. 136)

Through my conversation with Willie, I was reminded that if we are too involved in our academic research our communities may lose out on what we have to offer. When working with our communities, there is no doubt that we serve. Dawn Hill shared that “[a]fter five years with the Lubicon, I realized they have maximized my presence in all areas: as a woman, a Mohawk, and a professional. I no longer ask them what they want from my collaborative research project” (Hill, 1995, p. 33). I also believe that other Indigenous peoples and communities will benefit from the individual and collective efforts of Indigenous scholars tenaciously working to Indigenize and rehumanize academic methods of knowledge production.

The heavy academic involvement of Indigenous scholars with university interests and priorities denies and unfairly limits Indigenous communities access to their own resources for research programming and development... [And the]... The broad task for Indigenous scholars is to transform research scholarship beyond the colonial and neocolonial standards that are now the established order and to work at the cutting edge of knowledge production through empowering discourses and paradigms that model and enshrine the human potential of all peoples. (Ermine, 2000, p. 121)

Although research hasn't always benefited us, we now have a role in ensuring that our research agendas and goals do. Michael Hart stated that we have a role as learners and advocates simultaneously:

As Aboriginal people I believe we need to respect and stand up for our own practices, our own approaches that guide these practices, and our own views that determine our approaches. In order to do this, we need to continue learning about our history from our perspectives. We need to continue to overcome the belief that has been instilled in many Aboriginal people that these practices are irrelevant, or worse, to be feared. We need to continue turning to our own Elders and healers as legitimate providers of information and resources. We need to continue learning who we are as Aboriginal people. (Hart, 1997, p. 188)

Indigenous scholars are not in the academy to simply espouse rhetorical word games but to ensure research methods create change which benefits communities. Further,

[t]he role of these indigenous professionals is similar to the role played by the first generation of indigenous teachers and nurses and by the first generation of medical doctors and social workers in native communities, a difficult role of translating, mediating, and negotiating values, beliefs, and practices from different worldviews in different political contexts. (Smith, 2005, p. 96)

Indigenous researchers are assuming control over our future and in doing so are transforming the way knowledge is produced. Missisak, in our conversation talked at length about her role in transforming Indigenous forms of knowledge production and her name in Cree means horsefly.

She says:

I like to bug the system and I like to bug people at the committees, you know, reminding that we're here and you need to acknowledge us, you need to even have the word Aboriginal on your agenda or in your admissions or something, to encourage Aboriginal people to come, respect its histories and so on and so forth."... I think that name was meant to give to me to help me in the work that I'm doing, because I am a bug on the system. I like to challenge the system. Well, I don't like to, but I do it. I counter, I correct, I do those things. ... We're here to stay. They're here to stay and they're a reminder that we're here to stay. ... We're part of Creation, in other words. So stop getting rid of us. Stop trying to get rid of our language, our knowledge, you know, stop trying to assimilate us,-- so it's that kind of story. So it's been kind of an interesting story how it unfolds. I really use that a lot and try and develop methodologies or using methods that are, again, Aboriginal friendly or relevant. (Missisak transcript, p. 16)

Our perception of ourselves as researchers or searchers or gatherers comes from and is rooted in our traditions. Long before we were in the academy, our ancestors were conducting research and relied on Indigenous methodologies as they sought out knowledge. Today, reclaiming

Indigenous methods of searching for knowledge embodies our own learning and healing, and is transferable knowledge.

I think somebody can do a paper where they're strictly citing Aboriginal scholars, but they couldn't do that before, you know, without doing this kind of comparison, "This is why I'm doing this, because this is what I found I have to do" and explaining certain parts of my methodology and saying that, "Well, this is like a focus group," so people understand what a sharing circle is, for example, you know, and so that they would have that – well, it's kind of saying you're still getting data, you're still getting information, but the method that you're using, the process, and the guiding principles are slightly different. (Missisak transcript, p. 5)

As we do this, we call into question the old order of eurowestern forms of knowledge production that has been both problematic and colonizing. I'm hopeful that our work will collectively provide an ongoing critique while moving us forward into research methods that enable us to recover and contribute to Indigenous knowledge.

As we occupy critical spaces, again (as stated on page 169), we have a role as 'myth busters', says Raven. We challenge myths when:

[w]e engage in Indigenous research or the soft qualitative type research, we're not being objective enough. I think that's a myth. And I say that because, when I follow my traditional ways of being, my traditional teachings, I'm required to be objective, and not only about life around me, but about myself. I'm required to reflect upon my location in terms of my environment and don't make assumptions and treat other people the way you want to be treated and – and those things, you've got to be damn objective. You've got to be damn objective to sit there and listen to an Elder tell you, "Well, you're just being bossy right now" or, you know, for them to mirror something to you that you need to learn in order to grow and mature. You've got to be objective or you're going to spend a lot of time, you know, in a little ball, curled up crying and whining by yourself. Those teachings

are not easy and they demand objectivity. They're experiential, but they require reflection and weighing all of those perspectives. Yeah – we're all about myth busting! (Raven transcript, p. 42)

Within the academy the role of Indigenous researchers is to transform systems of knowledge production to form congruency with Indigenous worldviews and to play a role in producing knowledge and information that is useful, beneficial, and purposeful toward Indigenous emancipatory goals. Actualizing these goals through our roles is a challenge.

The challenge for Native American scholars in the social sciences then, is to transcend the influences of “structuralism, modernism, and the dualism of subject, object or otherness” and to deny “paracolonial discoveries and representations of tribal literatures.”<sup>60</sup> The challenge for Native American historians is to create space for innovative articulations of the Indigenous past that bridge the old and the new. (Stevenson, 2000, p. 21)

Resisting academic acculturation is an inherent role in a conscious scholars' mind. Raven (Sinclair, 2003) points out resistance to Western research domination has been occurring as Aboriginal researchers' secretly apply their own worldviews, protocols, and practices. And in our conversation, she talked about her research and said:

I guess the main finding was that they had all incorporated their cultural practices and protocols into their research, but they just hadn't shared it with anybody, because they didn't perceive that there was any, there were any forums in their methodologies or in their research processes within those institutions to share that information. So, for example, one of my participants said, you know, I couldn't share that I had gotten my dissertation topic from my kokum in a dream, because she is deceased, eh? How would my committee take that? (Raven transcript, p. 7)

Some searchers do not tell their supervisors or write about their methods in their thesis. Yet, they still honor their own protocols and practices because they must. Indigenous methodologies have been forced underground or into the closet, and this oppression evokes frustration and

anger. At the same time, the growing literature leaves no doubt that change is here and Aboriginal methodologies are quickly gaining momentum and respect. Resistance, in these examples, is not so much about making concessions as it is about avoiding academic bureaucratic potholes. They are strategic decisions and Indigenous scholars must make them, to honour their responsibilities.

Strategic thinking is embedded in our languages. The 'Keemooch' concept is an innovation and Cree expression used by Missisak to characterize how Indigenous academics take on their roles. It characterizes the undercurrents of resistance in our work and the subversive or sneaky way we navigate the academy to operationalize our agendas.

I would 'keemoochly' bring something in or I would raise it or would write it up anyway so that it's embedded in my writing. And I think in terms of teaching, I'm more assertive about using the *concept of keemooch*, and saying what that is. The undercurrents, the conventional structures [in academia], they're very Western. That's the framework and there's flushing content. To me we can bring the keemooch stuff and the flushing and the content. This is Aboriginal content. Sometimes we bring it into the very Western framework. But once we bring the Aboriginal content into this Western framework, we then push the margins of transforming that Western framework into more Aboriginal and Indigenous ways of research and teaching and doing. And that's what I do. It's constantly speaking on it, addressing it, talking about it wherever I am. Even if I'm not on the agenda, I find a way to piggyback on someone or say, "Well, how does this affect Aboriginal peoples?" To me it's going against the grain. Raising critical issues. I think in many ways it kind of follows those concepts, except that when I say, *keemooch*, I'll do it in a way and sneak it in. We'll make sure that the Aboriginal position is there, even though it wasn't initially thought about. That's why it's 'keemooch', because it wasn't planned. "We're just going to do it keemoochly." So I think in that sense a lot my work still really ends up being that, and that is a keemooch way of working. And then also we're bringing in people I know that

will support that too. I think part of it is what permission we give ourselves, allow ourselves to do at what times too, and what will fly. Like you see the fly is there again. So the fly is constantly in my life. (Missisak transcript, pp. 45-46)

As we occupy spaces within the academy and develop our research goals, questions and proposals, we are assuming our roles as activists and advocates by asserting Indigenous frameworks, paradigms, epistemologies, theories, and methodologies. We are here collectively crossing borders, disciplines, and faculties.

Indigenous researchers are “becoming” a research community. They have connected with each other across borders and have sought dialogue and conversations with each other. They write in ways that deeply resonate shared histories and struggles. They also write about what indigenous research ought to be. (Smith, 2005, p. 89)

Within my research, I consciously selected critically conscious Indigenous scholars from the Indigenous academic and graduate research community. Their graduate searches are closely linked to their roles as advocates, facilitators, coordinators, helpers, healers, educators, and much more. Clearly, Indigenous research involves an anticolonial, liberatory and emancipatory declaration of being. “Implicit in such a definition is that indigenous researchers are committed to a platform for changing the status quo and see the engagement by indigenous researchers as an important level for transforming institutions, communities, and society (Smith, 2005, p. 89). Maggie in our conversation told us about the journey through which her methodology emerged and this story will impact how methodology emerges in the academy. Missisak’s role as an advocate for advancing Indigenous perspectives is clear. Jo-ann Archibald communicated a Sto:lo and Coast Salish approach. Peter advances Indigenizing methodologies through a canoe journey is a warrior through his anti-colonial discourse. Michael’s commitment to his family, community, Elders and culture is also clear. Raven is a myth buster. Dawn

Marsden conveyed her role as a catalyst to retrieve, collect, and retain community traditional knowledge in healing. They all contributed a critique of colonial research methods and strengthened the presence of Indigenous knowledge in the academy. Many of us regard the search as a learning journey where portals of discovery await and this journey allows us to assume our roles as active gatherers and hunters in Indigenous research. Activating our roles and maintaining a strong backbone involves strengths and supports that accompany Indigenous researchers who enter in the academy. We are not alone as we carry our supports with us.

### *Indigenous Searchers' Strengths and Supports*

This section illuminates the strengths and supports that enhance conscious Indigenous researchers' methodological backbone to cope and conduct their research in the academy. First I will delve into personal strengths, followed by cultural strengths, and then community supports. These strengths and supports already exist for Indigenous researchers and they simply carry them within. I believe that most of the tools and resources indicated by Indigenous searchers exist within each person such as their inner strength, cultural connectedness and family / community supports.

Surviving the academy requires a vision beyond the academy, a sense of purpose, a grounding in identity, external supports and internal allies. Indigenous scholars resist forced fragmentation and do not want to check identities and worldviews at the door of the academy, nor should we have to. Suggesting Indigenous scholars leave integral pieces of themselves out of their research is unethical and oppressive. Within the academy we are, at times, navigating chilly, intolerant, hostile and assimilating channels. Researchers in this thesis spoke of the obstacles and challenges they faced as they navigated and actualized Indigenous methodologies.

We survive and get through because of a strength in knowing who we are and where our supports come from. The completed theses reviewed were significant to articulating these strengths and are a testimony of survival and strength because their authors did make it!

In thinking of our strengths I returned to the bush and remembered that dealing with obstacles was normal. It was rarely easy to walk in the woods. These memories helped me feel less agitated about obstacles because they reminded me that the earth has taught me to be a persistent problem solver because, if you are alone, no one will help you in the bush. You have to figure things out and utilize your own resourcefulness.

I remember as a child, my brother and I being out in the bush alot. Like many other days, we were exploring the land and imagining the life of our ancestors. The trails we walked were lined with birch, poplar, pine and maple trees. It was spring and the sun shone through the trees. The leaves weren't quite budding yet and the earth hadn't started birthing. The woods were full of song birds, squirrels scurrying here and there, insects and other small creatures. I truly loved being in the woods. The bush was easy to walk through and we could see over the terrain. We were heading for a favourite spot: a rock cliff next to a nearby lake. There we would sit and gaze over the sparkling water. There we'd have our snack and goof around. Along the way though, we came across a wide creek with fast flowing water. It was spring and the water was high. We gazed up and down the creek to see if we could just jump across, but we didn't see a narrow enough spot. We looked at each other and then turned to search the ground to see what else we could do to get across that creek. Trouble shooting made the journey more interesting and fun. We wandered around searching for a log or something to make a bridge. Gradually we found an old log and dragged it over to the creek. Despite its weight and size we managed to toss it in the water. We did it! Our bridge was made and we carefully crossed the creek balancing ourselves on that log. Having made it to the other side we triumphantly and happily continued on

our way. Fortunately, there were no fences there to stop us, nor were there gatekeepers there to keep us on one side of the creek. (K. Absolon, 2007)

We become stronger in confronting, coping and problem solving obstacles we face and those strengths can define us as warriors. Today, Indigenous researchers rewrite our stories and histories from resistance and strengths perspectives.

Internal fences keep us boxed into a particular way of thinking, being, and doing. Even if there were an opening, our internal fence would prevent us from seeing that opening. Internal fences can confine and limit our perceptions, behaviours, and actions. Internalized racism and colonialism are internal fences that have resulted from government imposed policies and structures meant to oppress and eradicate Indigenous peoples. Systems such as residential schools, churches, reservation systems, and Indian legislation perpetuated internalized racism. When oppressive messages are forced and repeatedly imposed, a person internalizes them and comes to believe that they are inferior and the White people superior. Conscious Indigenous researchers have worked to develop and heal their minds from internalized oppression and racism. Our searches are about Indigenous peoples' survival and in order to survive we remember who we are and what we know. Our search for knowledge is ultimately connected to an emotional and personal search related to Who am I? And Where do I come from? Many of these researchers faced internal fences. Their consciousness of these fences is a powerful tool of conscientious researchers and searches. Decolonizing our minds and thus our research is a journey and a process of learning, healing and critical reflection.

When I first considered a doctoral program, I remember asking a clan brother of mine, Zahgausgai, for advice about leaving my community work to begin a PhD. I told him that I didn't want to lose myself in the corridors of the academy and that I wanted to do something that would benefit us. I wanted to enter another degree program knowing that I would keep my

identity intact. I did not want to be buried in Western theories and methods of learning, researching and writing. I later met another Anishinaabe person and was encouraged about the OISE program when he shared his doctoral experience and indicated that there was a good probability that I could do Indigenous research. I shared this hope with my clan brother, he urged me to not be afraid because I was strong enough to stay grounded and I wouldn't get lost there, but if I felt I was getting lost that I could leave. He encouraged me to enter the program and bring my whole self with me. That is what I did! I entered a doctoral program with a determination to remain congruent and to advance Indigenous knowledge, perspectives and methodologies while there. During my doctoral research course it very quickly became necessary to navigating hostile and intolerant channels. Thankfully, there were Indigenous students, professors and non-Indigenous allies present. My Indigenous colleagues and I supported and validated each other. We searched for means and pathways to remain congruent and we were strong advocates for Indigenous ways of thinking, being and doing. We were all seeking theories and methodologies which would support our values, identities, cultural orientations, worldviews and research agendas.

During this time, I started to think about my life in the bush and began going back into my memory. I started to think about what I learnt from my mother. I was reminded of her teaching 'don't get lost'. My clan brother also encouraged me to not get lost by advising me to take my whole self with me and remain congruent. So I started thinking about how I was taught to not get lost and remembered the following story and wrote about it during the development of my thesis proposal:

Every time we'd go in the bush, my mother would always make markers along the way. The markers took the form of broken branches, placing rocks strategically or she would teach us to turn around and look at where we came

from so that we would recognize the landscape coming back – whether it was a tree or a creek or rock. She was even nicknamed ‘princess broken branch’ because of her practice of creating markers to not get lost. Every time we walked further into the woods she would tell us to turn around and memorize what the land looks like because when we returned to come back home we would need to recognize it. “Turn around and look at where you’ve come from”, she’d say. We would walk in the bush and then we would have to turn around, pause and memorize that pine tree, that rock, that creek - walk further along, turn around, and memorize, so that when it was time to come back, we would recognize the landmarks from where we’ve been. She taught me to always turn around and to look at where I’d come from so I’d know how to get home and not get lost. (K. Absolon, 2007)

Teachings I received growing up in the bush today give me strength and I know that I have the ability to identify my markers along the way. In the academy, I think our research is about finding our way home – metaphorically speaking. There is an urgency and a very strong pull to reclaim our birthrights as Indigenous peoples before they are lost. A majority of the participants indicate that their searches fulfill a strong desire to find their way back home again. For some, the academy is the means in which we are finding our way home. Through the academy, we are searching for our knowledge, histories, cultures, traditions, stories, names, identity, community, and family. We require congruent methodologies so we don’t get lost. Indigenous knowledge and methodologies enable us to conduct our searches so that we find ourselves.

Academic channels can become murky and muddy and can bog us down and distract us from actualizing Indigenous worldviews and methodologies. The following is another teaching that I carry because I know that gathering requires strength, knowledge, and skill to get through obstacles and thick terrain.

The bush is full of barriers and obstacles and we learnt to get around them somehow. Obstacles do exist, but when we stop and open our minds up to the possibilities, we usually find another way of continuing on our journey. It is no fun walking through pickies or thorny bushes. No one wants to cross the river at the widest or roughest part, we search for smoother places to cross-waterways, or we journey on land that is more compatible to walking. Necessity instigates journeys into thick bush or through rough waters. Only in pursuit of those low bush cranberries or that bush of lush blueberries will I cut through a thick piece of bush. I see what I want and I bushwhack it to reach my goal. I keep my eye on those lush blueberries because that's what I'm after and they won't be around indefinitely. One day I journeyed deep into the bush in search for blueberries. I was gone all day. On my way back home I didn't recognize the landmarks. I turned in different directions and it all looked the same. Sometimes in the bush the landmarks begin to look the same after a while. I got a bit confused and didn't see the landmarks that I tried to memorize. I wondered if I was lost? I stopped and listened and heard sounds and I saw that the sun was in the far west and I knew that I had to walk in a southeastly direction to get to the road and then go home. So in a pinch, I cut straight through thick bush and struggled to walk as I pushed branches aside one after the other to avoid scrapping my eyes and face. The thought of being lost necessitated 'bush-whacking'. My reasoning was correct. I eventually came to a road and recognized where we were and knew then how to get home. (K. Absolon, 2007)

Choosing our path sometimes means we have to 'bush-whack' it from time to time to reach our destination. I believe Indigenous scholars, are at times, bush whacking it in the academy. We are cutting trails and leaving clearer paths for others.

Sometimes resistance and persistence draws our strengths out. There is strength in resistance. Our languages and culture affirms our ability to search strategically. In our conversation, Missisak described the concept of 'Keemooch' which she described earlier and is a concept I love. Also, I belong to the Marten Clan and one of our clan teachings tells us that we

are strategists. Thinking strategically is similar to 'Keemooch'. Persistence and defiance as forms of resistance enable Indigenous researcher to proactively search in culturally relevant and meaningful ways. Resistance is a strong theme among critically conscious Indigenous searchers who balk at being controlled or overly managed by their non-Indigenous academic counterparts. Coping within the academy calls for strength and resistance to being colonized. It is clear from the searchers that resistance takes many forms. For instance, Raven stated earlier on page 176 that all the Indigenous researchers in the academy, who she conversed, didn't share sacred or cultural protocols of their methodologies with their supervisors.

All Indigenous researchers who maintain their identity within the academy are bi-cultural and have what Leroy Little Bear calls an ambidextrous consciousness (Little Bear, 2000). This ambidextrous consciousness allows us to negotiate the dualities of being Indigenous in a euro-colonial society. We occupy multiple spaces and are consciously bi-cultural. There is diversity within. We are skilled at carrying dual knowledge sets. This is an advantage. It enables us to move in and out of and between our worlds with relative ease. The duality of our vision is required by the colonial conditions we exist in. Winona writes:

The irony of my 'education' is that I spent 19 years studying my own peoples' past in universities, from outside perspectives, using Eurocentric sources, according to foreign conventions, when my own people have intellectual traditions of our own. (Stevenson, 2000, p. 211)

We occupy complex spaces where contemporary, cultural, and traditional realities intersect.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith in a recent publication identified this space nicely.

The issue of diversity is not just about people who eat differently and speak another language; it is about people who think differently and who know differently. Furthermore, it is also about people who, because of their education, can think like a student from a metropolitan university and think like a student from a tribal college and environment. (Smith, 2006, p. 551)

Our resource lies in our ability to draw on these dualities and ironies when we engage in research both as Indigenous peoples first and then as scholars. Our cultural identity precedes our academic identity. We do our work first as Indigenous people and then as academics. We are both Anishinaabek and scholars. One does not exclude the other. Our challenge is to achieve a balance within this blend. Dawn Hill talks about this in the following quote:

In this context there is a contradiction in being Native and an anthropologist; being the subject/object and an “authority” is, of course, impossible. As a Native woman I have been socialized to defer to elders as the “authorities.” I have been raised to be humble and respectful. Academia urges me to be “critical” and, therefore, disrespectful. Going for the jugular is rewarded. Anthropologists pressure me to define a Native perspective or build a grand Native paradigm. My conscience tells me only the Creator has that ability.... The key is not to be consumed by the hegemonic or to alienate myself in either world, and, more importantly, to redefine my role as an anthropologist. (Hill, 1995, p. 51)

At a personal level, what supports Indigenous researchers is their worldview, clarity, and inherent belief in what they are doing. Indigenous researchers who participated in my thesis were highly motivated and in touch with their intentions. They are aware, purposeful, and clear about their search motives. Their search agendas are not nebulous or ambiguous. Missisak says her strength is her confidence in what she is doing. Missisak stated that we have a way of perseverance, resistance, and defiance which I agree, has helped us to survive the atrocities and resist being assimilated. We know what we know and,

I think its confidence that this needs to be there and a little bit of defiance. Because I just think, you know, like as Aboriginal people in a decolonizing framework, is that if you really, truly believe that, we constantly have to push the limits and raise what we see as valid knowledge, to keep reminding people, keep putting it on the table. And sometimes I do that just to see how people will react. Being a little devil (laughing). My name is Missisak<sup>10</sup>. Well, I do talk about that

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<sup>10</sup> Missisak is a Cree word and means horsefly. Missisak states that her namesake reminds her of her role to bug the system, bug the academy to advance Aboriginal perspectives and ways of knowing. I use both Laara and Missisak to honour both of her names and all of her strengths.

in my story, in my thesis. When you look at that, you will see that. But what I've said is that with that name – my grandfather gave me that name as a child...

(Missisak transcript, p. 35)

Some people talked about an internal drive and passion to participate in creating change toward the validation and recognition of Indigenous knowledge and methodologies. Some are passionate that their work be practical, useful and beneficial to the communities. Others envision using Indigenous knowledge and methodologies in research with a clear intention of creating pathways for other Indigenous scholars so that the cumulative effect of our collective efforts pave a clearer and less arduous path for Indigenous searchers in the academy.

Indigenous methodologies intersect with our life. Researching in the academy calls for a personal sense of diligence, discipline, and wellness. Wauzhusk talked about personal factors that strengthen his ability to do his research.

Well, things that help me live my life in a good way are probably the most important resources. Because if I'm not healthy; if I'm not balanced; I'm not going to be capable of doing a good job in my research. So I have to eat properly, I have to sleep, and I have to get some kind of exercise, and I need to be spiritually fulfilled and connected. I need to be emotionally and mentally balanced with relationships with people around me and with all the baggage and things that have happened in my life. And that's why a big part of research for me is in autobiography, in looking at your life and positioning yourself. Because when you contextualize yourself, you're accounting for all of those variables and you are – like you're telling your story, you're talking about yourself, and every time that you tell your story, that in itself is sort of therapeutic. And you just keep telling that story, and every time you tell the story, it's a different story, because you are changing. And so autobiography or positioning yourself and telling that story, it's an important part of health too, and it's part of research. So that's a resource. And then the people around you, like you doing the things that you do to help bring balance, to remind me to do those things, and to go to bed at a proper

time, and to get up, and to relax and to go and do things that are fun and connect with people, to have my children around me, and to try to balance everything that I do in all of those domains, I guess. The teachings of the Medicine Wheel. Those are things that help me to do research well. And I guess they're not always the most balanced, I think. Well, how much do I participate in or do I – not participate in, but how much is ceremony part of my life or – I mean it's not easy to balance those things. You're always trying to remember all those things. And maybe when I'm just learning, it's more difficult to bring balance. Maybe I'll get better as I get older. (Wauzhusk transcript, p. 20)

Undoubtedly, living a healthy and balanced life and taking care of ourselves is essential because the search demands our whole self.

Most of the searchers found grounding in their spiritual practices when dealing with the anxiety and stress of doing Indigenous research in the academy. Winona identified prayer as a source of strength.

One of the primary differences between writing and speaking is that speaking takes place in a social, interactive environment while writing is a lonely, detached activity... For many Indigenous peoples, social science training and the solitude of writing, can be alienating... Writing about voices speaking is a lonely venture but only at times when there is no one around to talk it through with. And when I found myself alone, meditation and prayer filled the void. (Stevenson, 2000, pp. 20-21)

As I wrote I too felt isolated. I, like most of the participants, found support from Spirit through prayer, ceremony, and other sacred rituals. Sometimes smudging with sage provided stress relief. Talking to Spirit through tobacco or singing a song moved my energy to calmer states.

It was not unusual for these researchers to experience anxiety and panic during phases of the research journey. Especially, when uncertainty and confusion enter. Being connected to the land kept some Indigenous researchers from getting lost in the academy. Taking time to return to the land and feel the essence of the earth grounded their mind, body, heart and spirit during

uncertain and stressful moments. For myself, I go on long runs to release stress, reflect, and rejuvenate. Some people return to their home territory and feel their ancestors' presence to remember and reconnect with them and who they are. Some talked about fasting as a means of reconnecting with their vision and purpose. When panic entered researchers often turned to the elements of creation such as wind, water, earth, and fire as grounding forces.

I wrote earlier of the significance of my Cocomish and Shaumish in my life and in this dissertation. This was true for many of the Indigenous researchers. They often spoke about the ancestors as a source of strength and guidance and felt their presence in dreams and visions. We are close to those ancestors and continue to feel their spirits calling us to honour our traditions and heal from the colonial attacks. Our history is held within our bodies, our families, our ancestors and these histories and ties are deeply felt.

Our ancestors' legacy is in the lands, languages, traditions and cultures that they safeguarded.

These have enabled our ancestors and us today to survive genocide, assimilation, and attempted annihilation.

I believe that sources of fundamental and important First Nations knowledge are the land, our spiritual beliefs, and the traditional teachings of the Elders. To understand Elders' teachings, the values and actions of patience, responsibility, respect, and reciprocity are essential. (Archibald, 1997, p. 70)

Jo-ann points out that our spirits are strong and the strength of the spirit and culture we rely on is insurmountable. I simply do not have the words to describe the strength of spirit of these researchers. Their words speak for themselves. We talk about who we are. We are spirit beings. We search for who we are. We identify and locate and connect ourselves to our nations, our spirit names, our clans, our land bases and we have many expressions of gratitude for such gifts.

All the Indigenous researchers practiced reciprocity by making offerings in gratitude for knowledge acquired and gifts received. Sacred acknowledgements are expressions of gratitude

and appreciation for our culture, our life, our ancestors and many other things. So we acknowledge those forces that support and help us and we acknowledge our allies too. This 'attitude of gratitude' reflects the value of reciprocity, where we give thanks and offer our thanks for all that we receive. In these teachings and practices balance and harmony are achieved, which enables us to continue with our searches and our work. Those are internal personal tools and resources.

Some Indigenous searchers just knew that honouring their Indigeneity as a methodological guide would lead them in the right research direction. Maggie, in our conversation talked about searching from her worldview when she said:

and then it shifted to looking more at the cultural practices and knowledges that as Indigenous people, gave us information and guided us, but weren't necessarily part of the kind of knowledge that you would use in the academy in a basic methodological approach. So things like dreams, intuitions, these sorts of things, and how you bring that all into the academy. So that's how I started doing this research, just initially. (Maggie transcript, p. 9)

Undoubtedly, Indigenous research methodologies are empowering to Indigenous peoples. When western culture is so pervasive in life, the ability to employ Indigenous search methodologies in our searches is in itself a very supportive, affirming and rewarding process. Dawn Marsden in our conversation said that creating the Research Wampum Model was "one of the most affirming parts of the research project and the research process. And there was a lot of prayer involved in the research process" (Dawn transcript, p. 12). Indigenous methodologies empower Indigenous searchers. All of the Indigenous researchers who participated in this project genuinely enjoyed doing their research despite the many challenges they faced. Maggie in our conversation talked with enthusiasm about her search.

I like to take the Cree course and to go check into different sacred sites, medicine wheels, or just visit with people. Going up at FNUC is really cool, personally for me, because, there are a lot of Crees and Saulteaux there. And it's just being around my own, like going out to Okanese and Pasquas and being able to be a part of some of the ceremonies. Being able to participate in some of the community meetings. Being able to go out to Cupar, which was where I was raised, and spending time with my mom and my niece and nephew has been just really, wonderful. And those things I think are part of Indigenous methodology, because they're about family, about relationships. (Maggie transcript, p. 30)

Our research is about us and it's situated in our real experiences, it's about empowering real people and it's about finding our way home. The re-emergence and articulation of Indigenous knowledge and searching for knowledge in an Indigenous way, to me is about turning around and finding the familiar landmarks through our dreams, through our stories, through our experiences, and we're finding our way, metaphorically, back home. We are trying to get unlost. We know when we're home because we can feel it and we feel that familiarity when our process fits who we are. There are supportive signals and landmarks around us. As Maggie shared, there isn't so much dissonance about our process when the methodologies honour who we are as Indigenous peoples. A major insight was that Indigenous searchers, like myself, are enjoying their search for knowledge when we employ Indigenous methodologies in our processes because our learning, recovering, reclaiming and re-asserting is relevant to our Indigeneity. It's all very purposeful and connected to a greater intention. We insist on using our own processes for the survival of our knowledge and ways. During our conversation Ravens' passion is clear:

What drives my passion now is that I want to contribute my voice to that increasing and that growing discourse that is ours, that articulates to the world, that we have always had a way of being in the world that was extremely intelligent, because we operated on certain principles where the end result was

balance and harmony. My passion then is to contribute to that reassertion and that remembering and that recreation of our discourse that is going to inform other people in the area of research. That knowledge is as ancient as the stars. We just happen to be the people that get to say it and to be the reminder for the topic. And so that discourse is happening not just in research, but in other areas. I mean in education too. There's lots and lots of dedicated scholars who are doing the same thing. They're trying to operationalize Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous pedagogical forms into the Western education systems and curriculum. And that's pretty powerful. (Raven transcript, p. 18)

Many Indigenous researchers felt supported by their community. They knew they were not alone and this is a significant strength when researching in isolation within the academy. Community may be the Indigenous academic community, the family community, a community with similar interests and goals, a reserve community, an urban community, and / or a community of Elders. Michael, in our conversation shared:

For me community is pretty broad. I have a commitment to my community. My understanding of part of our traditions is that you be the best person you can to benefit your community. So what keeps me moving forward is I've got to do the best I can to support those in my community, so that we can all move forward together. So that's another really big motivator to keep me – I would hate to think, for example, if I dropped out right now and just had nothing more to do with any of it, because of the sheer amount of energy and life that's been invested in me by my community to keep going forward. And so that's a loss to the community. Also, things like – like even today, in the sweat this morning, those remind me that I'm on track and help me move forward in the way I want to move forward. So those, things such as sweats, driving around with elders and just having those conversations, those things help me move forward. And a lot of times conversations are about – okay, we're not talking about moving back into tepees, we're talking about how do we live today in this reality, but in a way that we still know who we are as Indigenous peoples. So those kinds of conversations, ones

like just sitting here with you help me move forward. So when you asked me to do this, well, of course I'm going to do it. It supports me. (laughs) So those are supports. When I think about it, it all relates, it goes back to our people. (Michael transcript, p. 21)

Many talked about wanting to do the best they could for their community and persevered because of their community. Community relationships and loving supportive relationships are often the glue that helps Indigenous researchers negotiate the obstacles and 'bush whacking' that the academy demands. Michael, like many others talked about being supported by their First Nation to be able to complete their work. I, for example, have been thoroughly supported by my family, community and Flying Post First Nation throughout my doctoral journey and I feel immense gratitude to my community and my ancestors. The support I have felt from my relations instills me with determination to do the best I can do for those around me. Indigenous researchers' communities are diverse, but they all spoke or wrote of community support in their research. Rarely do Indigenous researchers search alone: "The faith, support, and expectations of family and teachers sent her on this learning journey" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 2). At a personal level, the community includes children, partners, families, and friends. I asked Michael about his supports as an Indigenous scholar. He said, "it's my boys, my family, and the people around me and in my life that helps me to keep moving forward" (Michael transcript, p.20). Maggie sums up her supports nicely:

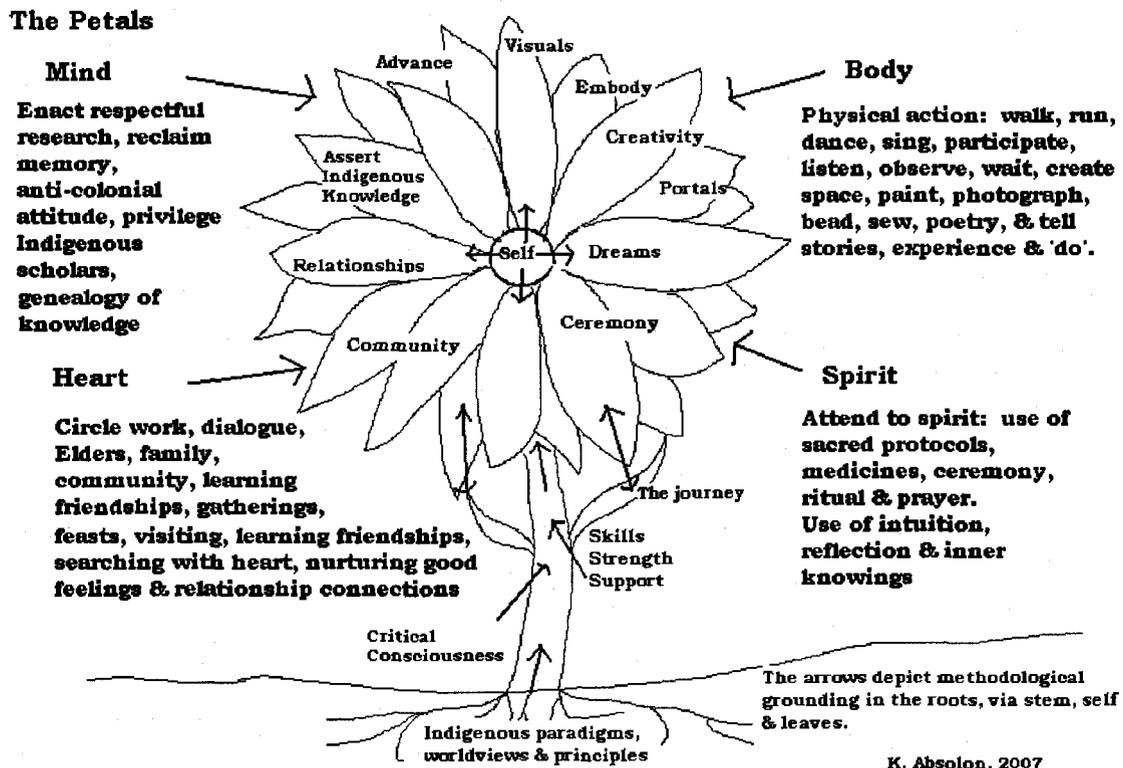
Well, I think what's really important to me, that keeps me going, and that keeps me inspired –I'm surrounded by really loving people. Like I really feel fortunate in my life that, I've got a partner, I've got families, I've got friends, I've got, people at the university a committee that genuinely care about, seeing me do okay through this process. (Maggie transcript, p. 35)

Hearing life stories from our relations has helped some of us understand our experiences within the academy and provided antidotes on how to survive. Today, we have the privilege of witnessing other Indigenous scholars finish the doctoral programs and successfully defend their searches. Role models are important supports. When we read our colleagues thesis and observe their dissertation defenses, a cultural mirror is created, myths busted open and we can perceive ourselves in such places. The impact is empowering. It debunks the idea that Indigenous people don't get PhD's. We do and we have the role models to prove it.

The stem as a methodological backbone emanates from the researchers' sense of self and identity. The backbone or force of Indigenous researchers and research is explicitly grounded in worldview, cultural and tradition. Conscious Indigenous researchers are aware that our presence bears roles requiring a strong backbone. We know the burden and responsibility of standing up for who we are. Wounds of colonial trauma and a survival drive to heal those wounds propel Indigenous scholars to adamantly assume their roles and responsibilities. Our vitality invokes a resistance to colonialism. Our power comes from the supports and strengths of family, community, and nation. Undoubtedly, the stem links the roots to the whole while lifting up the leaves, centre flower and petals. It is the backbone that supports Indigenous researchers to actualize their worldviews, histories, knowledge, and experiences in their research methodologies within the academy.

**Chapter Ten:  
The Petals:  
Diverse Methodologies**

The petals represent the diversity and complexity of Indigenous methodologies. They also include the spirit, heart, mind, and body because Indigenous methodologies are holistic in nature and encompass the whole being. Each petal represents tendencies of Indigenous researchers on their searches. There are petals that are hidden that represent Indigenous methodologies yet to be articulated because there are many more potential methodologies. There are also petals that overlap because Indigenous methodologies are interdependent, relational and reciprocating. The petals also change from season to season. They are not stagnant or formulaic.



**Figure 15.** Petals illustration.

When I started reading the theses and having conversations what I discovered immediately is that Indigenous methodology isn't something that you do because it's set forth in a research text. Indigenous methodologies are much more holistic and all encompassing than I originally thought. Methodology is within every process of our search. Just by being Cree, Anishinaabe, Mohawk, Sto:lo, or whatever nation you are – to some degree you are Indigenizing your methodologies. Your very presence in your journey enacts an Indigenous methodology. Your gestures, ways of thinking, being, and doing enact an Indigenous methodology. And many of us are employing Indigenous methodologies to varying degrees in our searches. And the Indigeneity of our research is held within our own spirit as our search for knowledge is regarded as sacred processes. It's not just a matter of offering *sema* (tobacco) – Indigenous methodologies are far more expansive. I really think we need many petals to demonstrate all the aspects of Indigenous methodologies. One thing for sure, Indigenous methodologies are concrete, complex, and complete. Peter Cole, in his dissertation represented his methodology as a journey woven throughout. The unusual line breaks in Coles' quotes duplicate the original text.

the traditional academic practice of methodology being in a particular chapter  
 would certainly not be in keeping with anything my culture could work with  
 for us thought and ethics and action were not add-ons not post-ordained bridges  
 for methodology had to be part of the weft and weave and darn and logjam  
 it would not be just an informing of practice the backstop of method  
 methodology had to be more than a wake or Chinook arch  
 a withering a forecasting of how research would take place  
 methodology is throughout what is absent too is important  
 (Cole, 2000, p. 312)

When doing Indigenous research within the academy, as Willie Ermine, Peter Cole, Winona Stevenson, and Michael Hart warned, there is a danger that Indigenous methodologies will be seen as addendums to western methodologies, marginalized as alternative, or Othered. Within the cultural and colonial academic contexts Indigenous methodologies and their emancipatory

goals are a product of Indigenous worldviews, principles, values, beliefs and experiences.

Maggie Kovach and I, in our conversation, enthusiastically talked about Indigenous methodologies as distinct viable options for students, organizations and communities. Maggie was jazzed when she said:

If people want to use an Indigenous methodology, they can, and just as if they wanted to use a feminist methodology. Do Indigenous methodology, yeah. And that gives me shivers, in terms of just being really excited about that because I think it's so important and I think it is really breaking trail. There's been a lot of really good work done before. But to actually put it out there as Indigenous methodology, as an entity on its own, I think it's really important and that's why the research I'm doing, the research we're doing, that's really going to be a part of that movement. That's a way of really, directly giving back and it will have practical application for other people.

I can see it even beyond academia and graduate students. When people are wanting to do an ecological study with one of the communities here, then the idea is, "Okay, well, what's your methodological choice?" The community can say, "We want to use an Indigenous methodology" that follows a Cree world view and use Indigenous methods like a sharing circle, like sharing stories, or whatever methods they want to use. But communities can say to government, "Well, if you want to do research with us, we really need you to use an Indigenous methodology. And so in that sense where the world view, that's the power of the methodology. (Maggie transcript, pp. 42-43)

Dawn Marsden shared her Wampum Research Model in both her dissertation and in our conversation and like the petal flower, it is holistic. Indigenous researchers are redeveloping and articulating Indigenizing methodologies and methodological means in their searches. Peter Cole, for example, uses prose, and a canoe journey. Laara Fitznor uses narrative and circles. Jo-ann Archibald uses storytelling, as Patricia McGuire uses her voice and personal story. Raven

attends to Spirit and Maggie journeys home. Dawn M. uses her dreams and visual artwork. According to Dawn M., Indigenous theories and methodologies are progressively being recognized.

Because Indigenous knowledge is holistic and cyclical (Cajete, 1994; Little Bear, 2000; Nabigon, 2006), Indigenous researchers describe their methodologies as having multi-perspectives or polycentric perspectives (McPherson & Rabb, 2001). Indigenous research methodologies must therefore be pluralistic, eclectic and flexible (Sinclair, 2003). They need to reflect the many facets of our existence today, while reflecting the cultural integrity of our ancestors. "Indigenous research methodologies are those that enable and permit Indigenous researchers to be who they are while engaged actively as participants in research processes that create new knowledge and transform who they are and where they are" (Weber-Pillwax, 2001, p. 174). Thus, the petal flower can be any type of petal flower.

The methodologies identified in this chapter are further organized using the elements of the four directions: spirit, heart, mind, and body. The petals are framed according to each element of being: spirit, heart, mind and body only to assist in creating some clarity in articulating the methodologies. I have organized the methodologies according to my teachings of each element. They are not mutually exclusive of one another and overlapping concepts will occur. The overlap simply reflects the holistic, inclusive, relational and interdependent nature of methodologies. The whole being, for example, requires all elements of spirit, heart, mind, and body to be strong and well. Indigenous methodologies, likewise, have aspects of all four elements too. I will begin with petals that are in the direction of Spirit and work my way around the petals in a way that is akin with the four directions of our being. All four aspects collectively and interdependently reflect methodological tendencies of Indigenous research.

*Spirit: Protocols, Ceremony and Honour*

Pam Colorado (1988) derives four dynamics that she says ought to steer our methodologies: attending to feelings, history, prayer, and relations. If we are to conduct research that is ethical, humane, relevant and valid our methodologies must be culturally congruent. Spirituality is central within Indigenous culture and expression of such are relative to one's nation or combination of nations and oral traditions. Undoubtedly, Spirit is a source of strength and directs searchers to conduct their searches in specific ways. All of the Indigenous searchers talked about attending to spirit. Conscious Indigenous searchers attend to Spirit, prayer, ceremony, dreams, and cultural protocols and it essentially means to care about how we conduct ourselves. Pam says that inevitably an Indigenous cultural process is also a spiritual process. Raven, in our conversation reflected back to me, the attention I paid to Spirit:

Like for example, you have this project to do. But the first thing that you did was you set up, you made a comfortable environment and then you attended to the spirit - through the act of giving the tobacco. And that tells me that everything that this is all about is a – this is a spiritual act, this act of research that you are engaging in – this gathering of knowledge. Your intentions are here in this (tobacco). And the way that you created this was about your intention, but it's also about all of those things for you that have come from your spiritual paradigm, sacred epistemology. And this is the physical manifestation of that. It frames this whole and has created this research activity. So that's the foundation. And then the rest is about being creative. (Raven transcript, p. 14)

Establishing respectful relationships with Spirit forms a basic methodological principle. Carolyn Kenny (2000) recognizes the need to be creative and to create safe spaces to conduct research in accordance with our own worldviews. She highlights four stages of preparation, enactment, validation and transformation in integrating the concept of ritual practice into research. Specific methodological tendencies in all of the search processes, to varying degrees, included the use of

sacred medicines such as sage, cedar, tobacco, or sweet grass. The principle of reciprocity is actualized with offerings such as tobacco and or gifts, depending on the cultural context and the searchers preference. At least twelve of the searchers gathered people together and offered berries, food and feasted as a gesture of reciprocity and gratitude. Indigenous methodologies exemplify concrete ethical standard and practices and Spirit is treated with the utmost respect and reverence. Leanne Simpson, for example offered tobacco and gifts during initial visit with Elders and left the ‘academic skills’ at the door (Simpson, 1999). Her conduct was guided by cultural protocols when interacting with the Elders and she states she did not interrupt, did not ask questions, and tried to be patient and wait for answers, listened, and observed.

The journey of our search is a spiritual process, and a major methodological concept for Indigenous searchers. It’s not something that comes from the mind. This spiritual depth is nurtured and encouraged within Indigenous culture. We are taught to honour our spirit. It’s not something we say we’ve learnt outside of ourselves. It’s a process that flows from within us, and that pathway that comes from within us is often identified as a sacred pathway, a pathway of the spirit. This understanding relates to our Creation stories and our worldview from where we originate. I’ve heard my Elders say that we are spiritual beings and in our Creation stories we are descendents of the Spirit. Every living thing has a spirit and has a purpose and we have a contribution to make. Raven, further talked about how her spirit guides her methods in the following quote:

The sacred epistemology – my spiritual frame of mind is my left brain. That takes precedence over anything else. So, for example, I thought I was done my data gathering and I did a ceremony and put out tobacco, and I was like, “Okay, now I’m done.” (claps hands and laughs). I got two phone calls the next day from participants who wanted to share their stories with me. And I wrestled with that very, very briefly and then I remembered. Nothing happens by accident. If those

voices are meant to be in this research, then it's my responsibility to interview them. And it took, you know, just a brief, split second for me to say, "Okay."  
(Raven transcript, p. 14)

We recognize an intuitive knowledge base that's connected to our ancestors, which is connected to the spirit world and other realms. There are certain things that we understand and know because we're Aboriginal or Anishnaabek. Anishnaabek Elders say the gift that the Anishnaabek carry, I mean all Indigenous people, is a holistic understanding and knowledge, that gift of vision - we can see all of life. We have the Medicine Wheel, we have the Circle, and we have holistic paradigms. Intuitively, Indigenous researchers talked about the holistic perceptions, connections and relationships that we bring to our search. Our understanding of spirit and our connectedness to all things make Indigenous methodologies distinct.

The search for knowledge is also a spiritual relationship with learning and knowledge production. When we are searching for ancestral wisdoms or traditional knowledge, the search process must acknowledge spirit. The searches were learning journeys, and of the fifteen sources, thirteen wrote or spoke about being guided by dreams, vision, ceremonies, and prayer. Raven is adamant about these being concrete methodological searching tools.

Spirit, intuition, reflections, dreams are very concrete and tangible. Dreams may not be tangible until we break them down and then it becomes, you know, in the written form. But whether it's concrete or not depends upon how you have been raised and your worldview and just your understanding of dreams and the role they play in your life. But that's very concrete. ... I think, really, what we mean to say or perhaps what we ought to be saying rather than not concrete is it's not yet fully articulated. Because we're working with two very different entities, as Willie would explain it, and in some ways they operated in dialectical opposition - and Willie's article [Aboriginal epistemology] is really helpful because he talks about the two world views or ways of being - Find another way to articulate

whatever it is that's happening around that lack of clarity or that confusion or that inability to express and articulate what it is. Because it's very clear. I'm doing my dissertation and the framework is Indigenous methodology and case study. Lots of other people have done Indigenous methodology. So I mean logically it doesn't make sense to say it's not concrete, because we're doing it. Yeah, so I just got lots of energy there around that. (Raven transcript, pp. 27-28)

Prayers, ceremony and dreams are concrete manifestations of how Spirit has a presence in Indigenous searches. In another example Jo-ann Archibald employs spirit in her methodology by “[t]racing respect from cultural protocol, appreciating the significance and reverence for Spirituality, honoring teacher and learner responsibilities, and practicing a cyclical type of reciprocity...” (Archibald, 1997, p. 16). In stressful times during thesis work, prayer provided comfort, support and was a source of strength. Ceremony is an expression of one's spirituality and according to Leanne (Simpson, 1999) ceremonies are: a source of knowledge; knowledge that comes directly from the Spiritual realm; are sacred and so Indigenous searchers limit what they detail. Ceremonies provide a channel to heal, cleanse, seek knowledge, and gain insight to help make decisions throughout the search process. Ceremonies and dreams assist in the synthesis and processing of our searches.

Guidance by the dream world and spirit beings moves Indigenous methodologies beyond the mind to include the spirit, heart and body. Dawn Marsden in the following quote eloquently shared how dreaming is a research tool.

To validate dreaming as a research tool, we must remember that dreaming is where we symbolically process, synthesize and resolve the information, questions and experiences that we have had each day, with the knowledge we have accrued so far, to produce knowledge “new-to-us”. Some dreams, which may call visions or gifts, are especially helpful in answering our questions, guiding our actions, or making sense of the world. (Marsden, 2005, p. 53)

Jo-ann Archibald also stated, “When I was beginning to formulate my thesis topic, I experienced a dream. Traditionally, Sto:lo people had dreams / visions while on an important “quest”. I told a good friend about this dream which gave me courage and direction for my research:”

(Archibald, 1997, p. 2). In another example, Maggie, in our conversation shared that her dream about home being important fueled her journey to come home and that became part of her methodology. Also, Dawn (Marsden, 2005) dreamt the Wampum Research Model after praying for direction because she felt overwhelmed with all the knowledge and information that had been shared. Leanne (Simpson, 1999) said that her dreams were repeatedly shared, interpreted, and used to make decisions about her work. It’s common in Indigenous cultures to acknowledge and integrate the insights, messages, teachings and events from the dream work into the waking world.

The shift required to make dreaming a useful tool for research, is to accept your dreams as a valid way of obtaining knowledge. Because you may not understand how dreaming works, doesn’t negate the information they are conveying. Just call them gifts. Dreams are valid according to the sense they make to you, in the symbols that are important to you. (Marsden, 2005, p. 53)

Research with a consciousness of Spirit also implies an awareness and understanding of enacting research with heart.

### ***Heart: Relationships, Reciprocity and Community***

Several concepts such as relationship, circle process, community, Elders, and working from the heart are methodological tendencies of Indigenous searchers. All of the searchers attended to relationships in their search which called for the enactment of Indigenous protocols to identify yourself and your purpose, create good settings, and to reciprocate the sharing and witnessing of their search processes. Wauzhusk acknowledges his relationships by using tobacco in his search exchanges:

But I think for us, as Indigenous researchers, we're trying to have a positive impact on the things that we are related to on the earth, to be responsible and to – not just to drop in and have a small, you know, a short relationship with the subject of our research, but that we acknowledge that we have had a relationship with that thing, probably, in the past and that we do now and that we will have a relationship with them in the future. And when we give our tobacco to our participants, as you were saying, we're not giving that as a gift to say, "Here. You give me some knowledge, I'll give you this tobacco." People get the wrong idea about tobacco. That's totally the wrong way of looking at it. Tobacco is in part acknowledging that you have a relationship or that you have had a relationship with your participant and that you will have a relationship with them in the future and that you're thankful for it and that they will use that tobacco probably in their own ceremonial way to give thanks for the things and the relationships that they have and that those prayers that they offer will go to the spirit world. (Wauzhusk transcript, pp. 5-6)

Laara Fitznor highlights in her dissertation the "various Aboriginal knowings and processes I utilized in my research journey" (Fitznor, 2002b, p. 65). She identifies teachings she gained from family, culture and traditional teachers about working at the grass-roots with people, with goals of self-determination and control. Research relationships were regarded as friendships to share encouraging words and reciprocal ways of relating. Creating positive research settings involves gatherings and meetings that reflected friendships, food, cultural / spiritual ceremonies and conversations about the future, families, communities and children. Within this process people share stories, laugh and sometimes cry. Specifically, these methods required adaptability, flexibility, and fluidity with the relationships they were engaged with.

At least, eleven of the Indigenous searchers spoke with and learned from people where existing relationships or mutual connections existed. In other cases, new relationships were formed through their research. In these manners the research relationships are continuing and

influence the gathering process. Michael, in his thesis, stated that because he is a Cree man and on the “inside” and participates in traditional activities, that his location influenced the amount of knowledge that was available to him prior to actually gathering information. On his methodology he states:

By not recording during the events, I was able to become totally involved in the environment. My focus was on my experiences, physically, emotionally, spiritually, and mentally. Not recording the events as they happened also respected the view of many Aboriginal peoples who participate in traditional ceremonies that recording should not take place. However, the sharing circles that I participated in occurred through a significant span of time. In order to maintain my memory of the circles, I did make some reflective notes after the circles occurred. (Hart, 1997, p. 106)

In my case, most of the people I had conversations with I already knew to varying degrees. This is partly because the circle of Indigenous scholars is still relatively small. It is also because relationships are recognized as an important strength and resource for Indigenous research and we make new relationships through our research. We use our relationships to move forward. For example, we create space to spend time together, to do things together and our relationships cross over different paths. Our relationships extend the boundaries of family, friendship, colleague, helper, teacher, advisor, and so on. Our relationships are formed out of diverse community contexts. Jo-ann Archibald recalls the learning friendships she developed throughout her research context.

I have known Vincent for seven years, but have watched him work at numerous gatherings over many years... Establishing relationships within this research context has become a way of establishing and sustaining lasting friendships with deep caring and endless stories and talk. Learning to listen with patience, learning about cultural responsibility toward the oral tradition, learning to make self-understandings, continuing the cycle of reciprocity about cultural knowledge, and practicing reverence are some of the lessons I experienced with Chief Simon Baker and Elder Vincent Stogan. (Archibald, 1997, pp. 81-82)

Searching for knowledge and the consequent transmission of Indigenous knowledge happens through relationship connections (Battiste & Henderson, 2000b). Teaching is done by relatives through storytelling of real life experiences and knowledge is transmitted through these orations (Little Bear, 2000). Relationship connections exist between the spiritual, physical and human realms. In developing good relations Russell Bishop (1998) encourages Indigenous researchers to seek the help of Elders for guidance and to learn correct spiritual frameworks or protocols. Pam Colorado (1988) says that learning the protocols is essential and asking for direction from the Elders is integral to Indigenous research. Further, she summarizes guidelines for preparing to enter into an interview relationship with people. Some of the key elements include: preparation, care about the people, visit and take time, choose a good location, nurture good feelings, relax and build trust, listen and watch, and bring your knowledge and mind with you. 'Personalizing methodology' calls for compassion, sensitivity and subjectivity (Ross, 2005). Personalizing and reciprocating research relationships in Indigenous research creates a process that is mutually beneficial. It is our responsibility as searchers to be prepared by developing understandings about oppression, power, race, class, ethnicity, and gender in our search for knowledge and to mindfully use our knowledge and experiences in a respectful and humane way. Ross (2002) states, "when I interview people, I communicate in a meaningful, sincere manner. I share myself and my life – I am not simply "gathering data." Moreover, the people I interview are not objects – I see them as real people" (p. 61). Laara talked about her ethics and protocols in honoring her relationships with people through the use of tobacco as a sign of gratitude to the Aboriginal people who helped along research journey:

Because I was relying on Aboriginal people to 'help' me with this research journey, I decided to use tobacco to demonstrate my gratitude to them. For example, for the purpose of this research project, I asked the participants to give of their experiences, their knowledge, their thoughts, and their commitment to

make this thesis a reality. I also informed them that I would provide a copy of my thesis to each person that was involved: a gift to acknowledge their contributions. By understanding the research outcomes, they knew that in giving their time and energy to this project that they are contributing to a body of knowledge that is needed to contribute to the improvement of Aboriginal Peoples. Also, in preparation for the sharing circle I offered tobacco to the Elder as a way of asking him to carry out a certain responsibility. (Fitznor, 2002, p. 74)

Relationship based processes are becoming common methodological choices for Indigenous searchers (Bishop, 1998a; Weber-Pillwax, 2001). Sharing circles and talking circles have provided culturally congruent channels for sharing stories, cultures, experiences, histories, perspectives, lessons, mistakes, knowledge and wisdoms (Archibald, 1997; Fitznor, 2002b; Hart, 1997; Marsden, 2005). For example, the Medicine Wheel has been used and applied to social work and educational contexts by Indigenous educators and social workers such as Jean Fyre Graveline (2000), Herb Nabigon (2006), and Michael Hart (1996). Sharing circles have always been a mechanism from which to heal and search for knowledge. For example, Laara (Fitznor, 2002b) utilized sharing circles to gather data and took her turn last in the sharing circle to not influence the tone or direction of the sharing. Interrupting, monopolizing, or dominating are nonissues in the sharing circle format because of the process of each person speaking in turn while everyone else is expected to listen. So people experience sounding their voice and listening to others. Michael Hart (1997) explained in his thesis that the circles he participated in did not have time restrictions and circles varied considerably from 20 minutes to two days. He was flexible with the circle location, which was determined by the community involved. His format was with open-ended questions and proceeded with more of an informal relaxed gathering in a conversational manner versus structured questioning which Peter calls 'interrogative' in his thesis (Cole, 2000). Dawn Marsden articulated quite specifically her use of talking circles with

groups and individually because it provided a process to facilitate storywork and circle methodology is founded on the concept that we are all related and interconnected.

One of the most interesting things about doing storywork in talking circles is that the researcher has no control, beyond introducing the research focus and questions, over the contributions that participants will make. The direction of stories shared can be written or deviate widely from researcher expectations. (Marsden, 2005, p. 197)

Another methodological tool that Dawn used was called “witnessing protocol” in the talking circle where four people simply witnessed and observed the talking circle. This process follows a Coast Salish tradition and is described by Dawn:

At the beginning of the talking circle, after prayers and songs and instructions, four participants were invited to stand as witnesses to the day’s events. At the end of the day, they were invited to share their observations. (Marsden, 2005, p. 197)

Working with talking and sharing circles can include the preparation and serving of food, offerings of tobacco bundles to express gratitude and good medicine shared, person centered voice, storytelling, and humour while generating mutual sharing, understanding and learning, non-interference of dialogue, and within an Indigenizing framework (Fitznor, 2002b). Dialogue is a core feature of relationship based processes and involves less of a question and answer, but more of an active engagement between people. Dawn identified having dialogues with individuals to add strength to the storywork process and invited participants to meet individually after her first gathering with them.

Each dialogue was initiated using a shorter version of the unfinished story, first used at the first gathering. The unfinished story served as a good reminder about the goals of the research project, how the main research question came to be, and led naturally into the asking more specific questions. (Marsden, 2005, p. 199)

The individual dialogue reproduced a form of the talking circle. Indigenous people who are familiar with circle work are more comfortable and at ease with circle as a methodology for

gathering knowledge. In my research process, I had conversations with people and in the learning circle a space was created for dialogue, sharing, and connections to occur.

Our families and communities become involved in our research. Dawn Hill, in her thesis, talked about her family developing connections with the Lubicon Chief. In my search, other family members were present at various times during my conversations. In addition to gathering participants, Indigenous scholars acknowledge family kinships as Indigenous methodology. Situating oneself in the community is also important for Mary Hermes (1998) who further states that “the relationships, of reciprocity and respect, ordered the methods” (p.165). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2000) articulates working principles for research from a Kaupapa Maori research perspective. These principles are written within the context of Maori culture and reflect fundamental aspects of Maori epistemology and worldview. Genealogy of families and historical relationships with family, land and the universe are central to a Maori worldview. So the issues for Maori research begin with how researchers think about Maori people generally in terms of the kinships, interrelationships and genealogies. She further describes principles related to language, customs, control and ownership of knowledge and the extended family. The work of Maori scholars in articulating Kaupapa Maori research and family models of research has been critically refreshing and liberating. This research is drawn on to support the Indigenous research agenda in Canada (Bishop, 1998a, 1998b; G. H. Smith, 2000; Smith, 1999; L. T. Smith, 2000).

Community relationships are another common strength of Indigenous methodologies. Consistently, conscious Indigenous researchers agree that our searches be purposeful and beneficial to community (whoever that community is and whatever that community represents). For example, my research community is comprised of a diverse representation and includes

Indigenous educators, scholars and searchers. I also have my traditional community and geographic community and my nation community. I have a clan family and a community circle of people who I choose to be in relationship with and who lovingly support me. Some searchers may interpret community to be their reserve, their First Nation, Indigenous peoples generally, their land base, their cultural orientation or their lifestyle. Community is determined and defined with respect to the searcher. Our searches generally occur in collective contexts and not in isolation. We need to be in the community context to continue developing Indigenous methodologies.

Leanne Simpson articulates the community-based protocols that she followed in honoring her relationship with community (Simpson, 1999). She relied on community experts and went to the fishers, hunters, medicine people, trappers, youth and children who were considered experts in specific areas. The Elders of the community asked Leanne if she would go to talk with other community members who have knowledge. In giving her direction, the Elders acknowledged that other sources and resources for knowledge exist. A diversity of understanding was gathered by spending time with these other community resources. In other words, the scope of her findings broadened and opened up doorways to knowledge. In another thesis example, Dawn Hills' methodology in gathering information was influenced by her cultural background. Talking with Elders was steeped in Indigenous traditions of reciprocity and community connections and this influenced the type of interaction she had with the Lubicon peoples (Hill, 1995). Working within a community requires a specific knowledge set on how to work with Elders and for this knowledge, one must be involved in one's own traditions and communities because we share commonalities between nations on establishing connections. Dawn recognized and respected that the search would occur the Lubicon way with the Lubicon people positioned

in authority over the process. She visited the community and stayed there for months. Even though she was searching in a different community context, she was assisted by an Elder from her own community who accompanied her to Little Buffalo, the land of the Lubicon nation.

Elders are the ones in the community who are recognized to have acquired knowledge and hold wisdom in areas of Indigenous ways, philosophies, theories and methodologies. They are the historians and recorder keepers. They not only have life experience but have an understanding of life. Elders are the ones who know the land and the 'old ways', they have lived and survived. They have stories to share and contained within their stories are knowledge and wisdom. Leanne Simpson, through her research, worked closely with Elders and was directed to Elders by the Chief & Council of the community and visited the Elders over an eight month period. Her relationship with the Elders existed on two levels: one was as a searcher for the community; and the other was as a learner about Anishinaabe ways and Anishinaabe identity. As a result, she says she developed more of a personal relationship with the Elders. In her search, she worked with a core group and had monthly meetings. The group directed her research and introduced her to Elders and other community experts, organized trips onto the land and ceremonies. The community group became her teachers and she states that she:

held them in a position of power, and our relationship was characterized by respect, friendship and open-ness. All the members of this group were involved in various activities surrounding traditional ways of community healing. We all shared a traditional belief system and were at various stages in the process of reclaiming our cultural traditions. It was these individuals who I spent the most time with, in sharing circles, speaking about dreams, camping, hunting, fishing, participating in ceremonies, story telling, learning by doing and working on various community projects. (Simpson, 1999, pp. 27-28)

Most Indigenous searchers have a heart connection to their searches and have passionate feelings about it. In my research, I found that Indigenous researchers enjoyed their searches and found them to be meaningful, purposeful and relevant. We deal with real issues, important

concepts and ideas and the learning is both healing and stimulating. They all found their searches affirmed their identity and helped to fill knowledge gaps that were targets of cultural annihilation. Indigenous researchers feel strongly about gathering historical narratives, traditional knowledge, and language skills. Collecting information, knowledge and understanding from individual and group lived experiences are invaluable searches that are needed for the ongoing survival of our cultures. Often the researchers themselves are inspired by the people with whom they are searching and from whom they are learning. For Indigenous researchers employing Indigenous methodologies from the heart, becomes a process of affirmation and validation of who they are, where they come from and what they know. Enacting research with a good heart is one pathway to 'bimaadsiwin', the good life. Doing research in 'relationship' reconnects us and remembers us to ourselves and one another. Perhaps 'reclaiming' and 'reconnection' as methodological search processes begin as early as searchers' connecting with one another and initiating a joint graduate thesis. Collaborative dissertations are not common, yet from an Indigenous perspective ought to be considered in enacting relationship-based searches.

***Mind: Respecting Indigenous Knowledge***

Respect for Indigenous knowledge is the main tenet of this group of petals. Enacting research that is respectful of Indigenous ways means that Indigenous researchers, in the academy, work to advance Indigenous perspectives, worldviews and methods in all areas of education, searching and scholarship. We do so 'Keemoochly'<sup>11</sup> with confidence, persistence and defiance in articulating Indigenous methodologies. We bring these methods into how we

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<sup>11</sup> Keemooch is a Cree word and according to Laara roughly translates to do something in a sneaky or indirect manner, with a note of defiance and/or resistance.

research within the confines of the academy, where we develop a critical consciousness, find our role, develop allies and recognize our skills and supports, and negotiate barriers.

Indigenous scholars reference and privilege other Indigenous scholarship, knowledge, and literature. The reason is simple, we need to grow and develop and articulate Indigenous theories and methodologies. Within the academy, we have been forced to privilege non-Indigenous theories and methodologies for too long. To continue to force such assimilative standards into Indigenous knowledge quests is unethical, racist and colonizing. We need to refuse assimilative standards and to make strategic decisions to not only include and assert Indigenous knowledge, but to be aware of what, how and why we include certain knowledge. Thinking strategically is a state of mind. We carry an attitude to work against colonialism. The defiance of colonialism and attempted annihilation of our lives, families, culture and land permeates Indigenous research agendas. Colonialism has contaminated our minds and this abuse must stop. This attitude comes more from a place within that screams for our way of life to be actualized. Is it my grandparents calling out? Is that my spirit calling out? Is that our ancestors calling out? Certainly, we are not disappearing and will continue to assert and carry a warriors attitude into our work. By enacting our Indigeniety we make a contribution toward realizing our knowledge and methods. Respectful searchers propagate and protect who we are, our identities and the way of life our ancestors gave us.

Enacting respect of Indigenous knowledge is manifested in common tendencies of Indigenous searchers by asserting Indigenous knowledge and methods, acknowledging their genealogy of knowledge, advancing Indigenous perspectives, privileging Indigenous scholars in their searches, making strategic decisions and negotiating academic gatekeepers. A respectful search process is contemplative, reflective, and thoughtful. Conscious Indigenous searchers

engage in their academic searches deliberately incorporating their knowledge and making conscious decision about what knowledge they share. Dawn Marsden, in our conversation, described the impact of asserting Indigenous knowledge and methods in our research.

There are different Indigenous theories and there are different Indigenous methodologies and there are different Indigenous methods. I wanted to be clear. I wasn't lumping everything all together, but saying, "Here are some commonalities amongst traditional based Indigenous holistic theories and traditional based methodologies," and "These are just some." I hope people are left thinking, "Well, what other Indigenous theories are there and what other Indigenous methods are there and what other Indigenous methodologies are there? Suddenly all this knowledge and information that's already been shared in research and in literature everywhere, you know, people can take another look at it and say, "Oh, okay. Here's a theory for that" and "There's a theory for that," and suddenly Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous people are no longer the savage, ignorant, blah, blah, blah, stereotyped people with nothing to offer, but here we are on a level playing field. I mean how many non-Indigenous scholars would appreciate suddenly being thrown into an environment where everything they had to share was quaint? (Dawn transcript, p. 66)

Enacting respectful research is imperative to Indigenous researchers who have said that Indigenous knowledge inquiry is rigorous. It simply takes more time, energy and effort to do searches the 'Indigenous way' because of worldview, ethics, protocols, inclusion, and process. For instance, this spring I felt compelled to take my children on a fast<sup>12</sup>. I had to follow Anishinaabe protocols in conducting this fast with my children. There were specific processes I engaged in because we were now working with spirit and in order to facilitate our fast in a 'good way', I was responsible to ensure that certain protocols were tended to and that the ones fasting

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<sup>12</sup> In Anishinaabe tradition, a fast is a process of entering into the spirit realm for a period of time without food or water. The reason is to seek knowledge, understanding or guidance from the Spirits.

were taken care of. Our environment had to be tended to and the time of year was another factor. I had to prepare my children and teach them. The grounds had to be prepared and our fasting camp set up. This is a small example showing that the knowledge and processes in which we engage to search are rigorous and ethical processes dictated by tens of thousands of years of tradition and survival. The preparation and process of going on a fast prepared us to receive knowledge. Willie, in our conversation, said 'knowledge' is our friend and we need to prepare ourselves to receive this friend and not be afraid of learning. Indigenous methods of knowledge production are based on culturally appropriate protocols initiated with conscious preparation.

Acknowledging our teachers and where our knowledge comes from is another common tendency of Indigenous searchers. From my search I learnt about the importance of respecting the genealogy of knowledge. Dawn Marsden in her dissertation and in our conversation spoke about the genealogy of the Wampum Research Model. Maggie, in our conversation spoke about the genealogy of the organic emergence of her methodology. I shared the genealogy of the petal flower as a holistic representation of Indigenous methodologies. Another aspect of recognizing how and where we learn is in creating space and visibility in our documents for the people who shared their wisdom and knowledge with us. Indigenous searchers discussed the desire to openly acknowledge who they spoke with and who was involved in their search process as an ethic of acknowledging the genealogy of our knowledge.

I agree that I have a responsibility to speak about what I have learned and that much of that learning comes from experiences; however, much of what I have learned also comes from others. Even though I speak from "me," the circles of influence from my family, community, and nation also shape "me." (Archibald, 1997, p. 4)

In oral traditions when we stand up and speak, we acknowledge where our knowledge comes from and acknowledge our teachers, helpers, mentors and guides. This acknowledgement

affirms our relationships and interdependence with others in our life. We live in relationship and learn from our relationships; this is the genealogy of how we learn and acquire knowledge.

Confidentiality, as an ethic then becomes relative. For example, I wanted the genealogy of knowledge within this dissertation to be acknowledged and all the people I spoke with affirmed this notion and agreed to be named. Indigenous searchers recognize the need to honour as well as protect those we have learned from. So confidentiality may at times not be appropriate and at times be necessary.

Indigenous searchers spoke with me about wanting to integrate past stories, knowledge, experiences and conversations they've had with Elders or family members. For example, Michael, in our conversation talked about integrating previous knowledge, talks and experiences into his current search. He called it a 'back door methodological approach'. Other Indigenous searchers identified that our knowledge also comes from our past and has traditionally been orally passed from one generation to the next. This knowledge passes through us and is carried on because we remember what we were taught and then we pass it on. It's important for us to reclaim our own knowledge traditions because "...they took our memories from us, now you just go on and take those memories back, and make them ours again." (Stevenson, 2000, p. 299). Indigenous searchers do this by pushing the backdoors open and challenging the academy to accept those channels of historical knowledge to come forward. Some researchers are going back into their memory and retelling stories they've heard or traditions they've witnessed. Again, the relationships are revealed in that methods of going into our memory are directly related to use of self as a methodology. Some of our original teachers have made their journey to the spirit world and that knowledge is retained in our memory banks. The only way to tap into

that knowledge, for its survival, is to tap into our own memory banks and then begin a process of verification with other community members or Elders.

Enacting spirit, heart and respect for Indigenous knowledge ultimately leads us to 'doing', becoming involved and active. Physical and body work as methodology actualizes the spirit, heart and mind of the search. Indigenous methodologies incorporate all aspects of our being and all connect to each other.

***Body: Doing, Working and Creating***

There comes a point where, in your process, you need to go beyond the writing and move from the cerebral, heart, and spirit into the doing and being (Rice, 2003). Words alone are not enough in a culture that is experiential, holistic, land based, and connected to all of creation. This section reveals how Indigenous searchers have enacted a physical element in their searches.

You know, there was no interest in my research until I started using, incorporating visuals in my research. The Wampum Research Model was the first one that I brought out. I use all these processes, but I wasn't writing about them, initially, until the Wampum Research Model. And then I brought it out and then suddenly, like everyone can identify. Of course it was predominantly Indigenous audiences. But, words are boring a lot of times and they're not very good at getting across meaning like visuals can. (Dawn transcript, p. 51)

The body elements of Indigenous methodological tendencies include physical actions and creating movements. Indigenous methods of searching and gathering generally involve 'doing'. For example, in June, 2006, I both attended and presented at a conference called "Shawane Dagoiwin (*being respectful, caring and passionate about Aboriginal research*)" in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The third phase of my search occurred at that conference where I was going to facilitate a learning circle on Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge. The learning circle was significant in my search as a means of giving back to people what I had gathered and learned. When I pick blue berries, for example, I gather them, bring them home, sort them out,

and do something with them. In a sense, I make meaning out of the berries by doing something with them: make pies, jam or preserves. When something is done with them the pies or jam is shared among family and friends. The harvest is shared. I prepared a giveaway with my search and did something physical while I was trying to make meaning of all that I had gathered. The act of making meaning became an act of embodying what I was learning and led to physically creating a tapestry of the petal flowers represented here. I needed a concrete representation and something visually stimulating.

Also at the Shawane Dagošiwīn Conference in June 2006, I listened to Dr. Brian Rice present his doctoral methodology where he retraced the journey of the Peacemaker in the oral traditions of the Rotinonshonni. His presentation was about walking the Path of the Peacemaker as a methodology for writing his dissertation in traditional knowledge. He conveyed that his dissertation was on the oral stories of the Peacemaker and before he could start writing he needed to embody the stories of the Peacemaker and felt compelled to take the Peacemakers' journey to do so. He literally walked an impressive 30 miles a day for a month retracing the Peacemakers' steps. Ceremony, prayer and visits to Elders in their lands prepared him for his walk (Rice, 2003). In his presentation he showed slides of his journey and told stories of the landmarks, the people he met, and his own journey. Brian Rice wrote about his Rotinonshonni methodology and stated his rationale for doing the walk in the following:

[T]he writing that I did during the colloquiums was still without any spiritual essence. This aspect would have to consist of some form of work that went deeper than the writing and learning process. For this reason, I chose to do the walk in the territory of the Rotinonshonni following the story of the Great Law as best I could. (Rice, 2003, p. 177)

Embodying our search is a concept I heard echoed in my conversations. We embody our searches in different ways. Some people do so in ceremony, and others take journeys such as Dr. Rices' walk or Peter Coles' canoe journey.

Dawn Hills' research with the Lubicon is another good example of active methodologies. Dawn was being invited to sweat lodge ceremonies, seasonal Tea Dances, round dances and other meetings with the Elders who took time to explain things through one on one discussions or in formal interviews. She said that,

I continually hounded Chief Ominayak and the council to assist me in articulating our "research project," the design goals, time frame etc. I was never given an answer, just silence and grins. In time I came to realize that the Lubicon chose to "show" me what they thought important rather than "tell" me. (Hill, 1995, pp. 28-29)

Either we find ways or those we work with find ways to embody our search, to internalize our process, and tend to the physical aspects. I, for example, travel, have conversations, do ceremony, sew, and bead. I also run to feel the earth beneath my feet, breath the air, and take space to process my search. In the following quote Dawn shares her story on painting and creating a research model.

The Wampum Research Model is one of the most affirming parts of the research project and the research process. And there was a lot of prayer involved in the research process. And I was at a point of being overwhelmed by all the information that had been shared with me and thinking about how to write about the research process, because it was – it's very complex and there's not a lot of models out there, as you know. And so I put some sema down and prayed and that night I woke up at about 3:15 in the morning and – it was one of those things where it was tossing and tossing and tossing in my dreams, like all the details were there. And so it was like I had to – and it was prompting me to wake up. So I woke up. And the skills most available to me are painting and I'm very visual. Because it was all visual in my dream. And so I just got out this big thing of, that

paper that you cover tables with and just started drawing. You know, I just got the lid of the margarine bottle and – it was all in my head and all the information was there. So I actually wrote about it later in a paper, about all the details. So I painted it all out. (Dawn transcript, p. 12)

Learning by doing is Anishinaabe pedagogy and Leanne Simpson provides concrete examples of what ‘doing’ meant in her research.

Within this study, learning by doing was a central method chosen by the Elders and community experts to teach me. For me, it meant participating, experiencing and reflecting in a number of activities in spiritual, emotional, physical and mental dimensions. I went on hunting trips, out to fish nets and to check traps. I traveled old canoe routes. I visited sacred sites and participated in sweat lodges and shaking tent ceremonies. I camped on the land a number of times with community members, and observed healing and sentencing circles. I participated in a number of smudging ceremonies and sharing circles. I was also asked to share my dreams and visions. (Simpson, 1999, pp. 35-36)

Working together is what Leanne Simpson identifies as an Anishinaabe methodology.

Specifically, in her dissertation an Anishinaabe method followed the seasons and worked within its cycles; followed the decision making methods of leaders; and honoured the Clan System.

The Anishinaabe methods of inquiry I have used as research methods in this dissertation include; Anishinaabe collaboration, apprenticeship with Elders and community experts, learning-by-doing, ceremony, dreaming, story telling and self-reflection. (Simpson, 1999, p. 26)

Specifically, she worked with a core group, meeting on a monthly basis. The group directed her research and introduced her to Elders and other community experts, organized trips onto the land and ceremonies. They were her teachers and she:

held them in a position of power, and our relationship was characterized by respect, friendship and open-ness. All the members of this group were involved in various activities surrounding traditional ways of community healing. We all shared a traditional belief system and were at various stages in the process of reclaiming our cultural traditions. It was these individuals who I spent the most time with, in sharing circles, speaking about dreams, camping, hunting, fishing, participating in ceremonies, story telling, learning by doing and working on various community projects. (Simpson, 1999, pp. 27-28)

Working with Elders is critical to understanding and knowledge transmission in Indigenous ways. The Elders, after all are the historians and record keepers. Leanne Simpson was directed to the Elders by the Chief & Council and visited Elders over an eight month period during her research. She was introduced to the Elders by a community group who also arranged for her visits with them. With the Elders she offered tobacco and gifts during her initial visit; identified who she was and what she was doing or what she wanted to know (although she didn't state she told them for what purpose). During her visits with the Elders, she followed appropriate protocols and did not interrupt, did not ask questions, and tried to be patient, listen, observe, and wait for answers. Her relationship with the Elders evolved on two levels: one was as a searcher documenting for the community; the other was as a young person learning about Anishinaabe ways and Anishinaabe identity. As a result of this way of working she developed more of a personal relationship with the Elders.

The physical element is also about creating space, creating change, creating a supportive committee, being creative and undergoing methodological shape shifting. Indigenous scholars, without question are pushing for methodological shifts and astutely assert a need for space. Laara Fitznor, Dawn Marsden and Winona Stevenson all spoke explicitly of the need to find a supportive space in the academy (Fitznor, 2002b; Marsden, 2005; Stevenson, 2000). A critical resource for any searcher is a committee of allies because a committee will help create space, as expressed by Missisak:

That's what I've done, is to keep bringing it back and bringing it back, "Well, what about this?" "I would like to do this," "I would like to do this" and then just being fortunate to have somebody like P. who would never resist it, but would say what the institution might support or not support. So in the end I got supportive people on my committee. (Missisak transcript, p. 41-42)

Creating space opens up possibilities. Maggie's going home created space for her to just be herself, grow, heal, think, search, and write. Her space allowed her to study the language, be in relation with family and friends and feel more at peace with herself. This space nurtured congruency, which I believe is pivotal to being able to produce authentic knowledge. We have to be careful to not be too rigid or dogmatic because we can't write a prescription for what home means or what groundedness means or what being centred means. With that being stated, Indigenous researchers work from their own sacred place. For Indigenous methodologies to manifest, they must have space for that to occur. Methodological shifts are shifts about creating space and creating space to make shifts, so that Indigenous searchers can forge pathways for Indigenous methodologies in Indigenous searches. Indigenous searchers clear paths by being critical of Eurowestern methodologies and blazing methodological trails. Dawn Marsden talks about this methodological shift as we make meaning of our search.

What makes Indigenous meaning making, Indigenous? While there is no formula, meaning making is Indigenous when it incorporates and makes use of Indigenous embedded, Indigenous sanctioned and Indigenous promoted tools for knowledge generation, which will vary according to each person, their cultural origins and their current context. For myself, praying, dreaming, visual arts and reflection are the most congruent with my worldview... (Marsden, 2005, p. 51)

I feel like a methodological shape shifter as I vision and dream about how to represent my search in congruent manners. The petal flower has helped me to shape shift from considering linear boxes and text to a representation that I can understand and relate to because I understand that our original teachers are of the earth.

In a sense, Indigenous searchers are shape shifting the way Indigenous knowledge is conceived, perceived and received. The act of making meaning of our searches lies in the question of how we represent all that we have gathered. Dawn Marsden contributes to the methodological shift by detailing a "beaded representation of the research process (figure 19);

this came after praying for assistance to comprehend all of the complex influences and considerations.” (Marsden, 2005, p. 201). Her model was generated during the making-meaning stage of the research, which for me occurred after all the berries were in the basket and the sorting of the search began. Analysis is a strictly academic term. Making meaning can be a physical process. The beads woven together represent the influences and relationships of more than three relevant groups: the Indigenous researcher, Indigenous community and the institution; and other considerations. The beads and weaving together represent knowledge that is as old as our ancestors. Dawn says:

This Wampum Research Model is a research tool that can be used and modified to represent, design, analyze or present complex influences and relationships in qualitative research and is a rich example of the potential or revived traditions and visual arts for expanding and extending perspectives into other domains of being and knowing. (Marsden, 2005, p. 203)

Dawn and the other conscious Indigenous searchers are methodological shape shifters.

Recent Indigenous searchers have presented some very inspiring representations of their searches. Peter Cole (2000) radically shape shifts out of grammatically correct English to prose, poetry, dramatizations, canoe journeys, and conversations. Calliou (2001) identifies four methodological frameworks by five Indigenous scholars (David Kwagley, Eber Hampton, Marie Battiste and Roland Chrisjohn and Sherri Young) which briefly are: acknowledging work with Elders, honouring our memory, use of medicine wheel teachings, and critical discourses on dominance in research, and calls them ‘give aways’. She also names ten methodological principles ‘graffiti slogan’ because her research focused on landscapes, creativity and graffiti artists and draws analogies to researchers creating ‘thoughtscapes’. Some of these are to know your landscape before proceeding, research from the heart, know your motives, data are not objects, and there are several others. Dawn Marsden’s most recent work incorporated visual arts

and painting. "Painting is just one of the ways that dreams can be expressed, but as a visual, is especially effective as a communication tool, or starting point for designing, analyses or discussions." (2005, p. 53). Visuals manifestations reflect an embodiment of methodologies. Avenues for giving voice are created through painting, beadwork, tapestries, sculpting, poetry, prose, stories and photography. Visuals help lift the words off the page because our searches are multidimensional and holistic. For example, Dawn Marsden stated that words can be boring and we need to keep conversations and words in their context and provide a context to the words.

The theories, methodologies and methods used in this research project were: Indigenous wholism, storywork, talking circles, Indigenous protocol, prayer & dreaming, unfinished story method, dialogue, audiotaping, Ojibway & Coast Salish practices, and visual arts. (Marsden, 2005, p. 182)

Stories are oral landmarks that are passed from one generation to the next. They contain knowledge of histories, traditions, events, and life experiences. Collecting stories can be physically demanding as Winona expressed in the following quote:

The study of kayâs âcimowina, old stories, has taken me moose hunting and taught me to clean and prep such fine feast food delicacies as moose-nose and smoked intestine soup...Cree education is based on interactive and reciprocal relations, and all knowledge comes with some personal 'sacrifice'. (Stevenson, 2000, p. 242)

Indigenous searchers talked about storytelling as a methodology to help our people tell their stories so they can leave their mark. These stories help us to not get lost. We build on our stories and each others' stories and eventually our stories weave together as we share them.

Collective storywork, as a research methodology is the active process of sharing, telling or engaging with multiple stories, for the purpose of documenting consistent and important themes. Collective stories are the final products or versions of what has just been processed, through reflection, analysis and conclusion. (Marsden, 2005, p. 195)

Creating a collective story involved beginning with your own story and then inviting participants to add to the 'searchers story' to create a collective story. Weaving our stories together brings us out of isolation and when we share our stories we realize we have common stories. Michael Hart during our conversation said that when we meet, talk and share our stories they "would be weaved together. And that's something that becomes really important as well, is weaving our lives together and making something strong out of it. The similarities become those patterns in whatever we weave together" (Michael transcript, p. 43). Today, our stories have changed to acknowledge what beautiful mothers, fathers, or grandparents we have, and what strength they have given us because they fought the fight. In our stories they came out, not in negative images, but shining and we can see their beauty and strength. As we share our stories they transform from stories of defeat to stories of survival and resistance. In a sense, we're shape-shifting our stories by turning them into stories of resistance and survival. Working ourselves into our narratives and collective memories is an Indigenous search methodology (McLeod, 2005). Stories are Indigenous methodology (Archibald, 1997; Cole, 2002). A restoring and re-storying methodology facilitates healing and reconnections. Weaving our stories together leads to a weaving of dissertations and a building on each others' knowledge. These are examples of Indigenous modes of knowledge production.

Indigenous methodologies create portals and doorways to self-discovery and other unanticipated journeys. Indigenous searchers found doorways that when opened revealed possibilities of healing, knowledge, history, truth, identity, culture, and much more. Like gathering berries or food, those who read this thesis will take what they need and leave the rest. The searchers throughout this dissertation describe many portals which are related to their context and search, and themselves. We need to continue to acknowledge one another and not

compete for knowledge ownership because “...researchers are not developing new paradigms and methodologies; they are simply acknowledging the existence and validity of knowledge creation and transmission in Indigenous Knowledge systems” (Simpson, 1999, p. 23). We are all working toward a collective goal of uplifting Indigenous knowledge and methodologies such as prayers, dreams, fasting and ceremonies. It’s not that we’re creating new methodologies, we are struggling to have our methodologies acknowledged and validated within the academy.

The diverse methodological tendencies represented by Indigenous searchers doing graduate research in the academy are a sum of a spirit, heart, mind and body enactment of holistic Indigenous methodologies. Brian Rice stated “... Traditional Knowledge provided the framework, the vision, and the process for the work. Traditional Knowledge methodologies are valid in their own right, and can be used to create a dissertation that combines Western and Indigenous epistemologies” (Rice, 2003, p. 182). They are interrelated, dynamic and fluid and dependent on the context of the searcher and their search. The roots of these methodological tendencies for conscious Indigenous searchers are in their worldviews, ancestral histories and languages.

In conclusion Chapters four through ten detailed a holistic view of Indigenous research methodologies and tendencies. They are diverse and varied, interrelated and interdependent. Not all are present at once, but are actualized to varying degrees and in diverse forms. Any petal flower could represent Indigenous research methodologies and its collective elements would represent their holistic and relational nature. Their distinction lies in their holism and their intimate connection to the worldviews, histories, cultures, languages, experiences and contexts of Indigenous researchers. Space is abundant and there is unlimited room for their ongoing articulation and developing discourse. My intent is to contribute and participate in developing

Indigenous discourse hoping that others will do the same. I encourage other searchers to explore the many other facets of Indigenous research at the academic and community levels.

The next chapter recognizes that we are affected by our environment, much like a petal flower is. The enviro-academic context is not separate, because it affects Indigenous research methodologies in the academy. It is a separate chapter because we enter into the academic context and this context does affect Indigenous researchers and their research methodology. It presents issues and challenges. Chapter eleven shares some of the issues mentioned by the graduate Indigenous thesis researchers in this study.

## **Chapter Eleven: Indigenous Thesis Research in the Academy**

### ***Introduction to the Enviro-Academic Context***

The petal flower is affected by its' environment and similarly, Indigenous researchers too are affected by their environment and academic, enviro-academic context. The academic context is not directly a part of us because for our graduate studies, we enter it, interact with it and then leave it. During that time we both affect and are affected by the academic context. In this study, Indigenous searchers faced environmental controversy and challenges as they entered the academy and began asserting their methodologies. Anticipating challenges, some took precautions prior to entering the academy and Winona, for example, wrote: "Before she packed up her pick-up truck for Berkeley, he [Harold, an Old Man] took her to the mountains for ceremony to protect her spirit from the harsh environment she'd be living and learning in" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 2). In addressing enviro-academic issues, this chapter first acknowledges academic gatekeepers. Second, I acknowledge allies and the research committee. Third, writing oral traditions in text is discussed as searchers find ways to communicate findings and share the harvest of knowledge. Finally, this chapter identifies developmental issues that are challenging and unique to Indigenous research.

### ***Fences and Gatekeepers: Help or Hindrance?***

As Indigenous researchers nudge their way toward empowering Indigenous theories and methodologies, 'old order' power holders of western forms of knowledge production may become aggravated, irritated and annoyed. Power is rarely relinquished freely (Pinderhughes, 1989). Controversy and conflict are sure to arise and Indigenous searchers have demonstrated ingenuity and determination in confronting barriers.

Indigenous scholars who are primarily schooled within Western positivist frames are taught that research should be neutral, generalizable and replicable. We are taught to divide, categorize, standardize, reduce and remove human nature from the process. And we are warned against having a personal involvement / stake in our research. When courses on Indigenous research methodologies are not available, the starting point for many Indigenous researchers rests in recognizing the limitations of Western research frameworks, critiquing them and then choosing to make adaptations or to let them go. Raven, in our conversation talked about this:

I've always been in the Western education system at the same time as going to ceremonies and meeting teachers and learning different teachings and having lots and lots of experiences, cultural experiences as an urbanized Cree woman. And so some of the teachings and things I got out of context. And I had some bad experiences where there was abuse of power. I guess just a flagrant abuse of power. I grappled with all of those sort of experiences. In my master's we did what was called the designer thesis. I did a thesis on a research methodology. So I didn't actually go out and do any qualitative or quantitative data gathering; it was text research. And so when I got into my doctoral work, of course, you have to take research classes and what was missing for me was again the cultural mirrors. I mean I had gone through my undergraduate at the First Nations University so I was out to experience a little bit of what it's like to try to infuse a Western curriculum with Indigenous thought and knowledge. And at the PhD level that was really missing. Everything was purely Western. (Raven transcript, p. 6)

The big question is then what do I replace it with and how do I do Indigenous research methodologies? In terms of methodologies, letting go of Western methodologies opens doors to recognize that other real choices exist. Maggie in her search evidenced this. Neutrality and pseudo-objectivity<sup>13</sup> in their scientific sense do not define Indigenous research because location,

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<sup>13</sup> See my earlier discussion in Chapter two on the distinction made by Margaret Benston (1989) on pseudo-objectivity and objectivity where I discuss "Allied critiques of euro-western research methods".

situatedness, relationships and motives are central to holistic Indigenous research agendas. That does not mean that we are not objective or rigorous about what we are doing. On the contrary, as Raven asserted, our protocols and methodologies are ethical, objective and respectful. It's difficult to be critical of western methodologies when we have internalized western definitions of knowledge and science. So to become progressive Indigenous researchers we have to become aware and conscious of the history and impact of colonizing methodologies and oppressive theories. We have to undertake a journey of learning, unlearning and relearning and this journey is difficult because we are inundated with colonialism every moment of our day. Some of the researchers such as Raven, acknowledge that it would have been simpler to just do Western research, stay detached and get it done.

I mean if I could, I probably wouldn't choose it. But, if I had druthers, it would be kind of nice to just be that, a distant, removed researcher doing a case study, where I just had to interview my participants or something. No, no. I'm in this journey and it's very, all encompassing, because it's a personal one, it's an academic one, and it's a spiritual and stuff like that. (Raven transcript, p. 38)

Like Raven, doing Indigenous methodologies in the academy sometimes means taking the road less traveled and bush whacking it from time to time.

External fences are structurally, institutionally imposed and enforced and create obstacles and challenges. Indigenous researchers become hoop dancers as we jump through bureaucratic hoops that defend colonial education structures, programs, content and procedures. As Dawn Hill noted in her thesis:

Post-modern theories have acknowledged their own power positions, subjectivity, and historic moment in the process of social analysis... Thick descriptions of post-modernism and anti-imperialist literature continue to drown out the "others" voice. The notion of grasping the Native point of view is obscured by self-justifying, self-reflection, and global interpretation of the self rather than the other. There is little room for the other to make a true presence within the

theoretical debates over analysis currently underway. ... The problem with the Native voice entering into the debates constructed by the “dominant” discourse is in danger of intellectual assimilation. ... [and in this manner] “the Native point of view will always be a construct of and by the ethnographer. (Hill, 1995, pp. 57-58)

Many of the Indigenous researchers who described their search for research methodologies within Western frameworks to fit or support their Indigenous research projects expressed much frustration and anguish over their search. Even though they found useful elements within feminist, phenomenology, critical theory, narrative, and participatory action – they couldn’t find a full fit for their work within Western research frameworks. Missisak, in our conversation shared her tensions and frustrations:

[O]ur struggles with the institutions, our struggles with our respective workplaces, with colleagues, the resistance to having even Aboriginal people, you know, coming in to take up a position and with bringing anything with Aboriginal perspectives. Like there’s a difference today than there was back then. And that’s not to say that it’s still not happening. So it’s the whole idea of the acceptance by Canadians in general to welcome, you know, Aboriginal perspectives and processing it into their work lives and into their institutions, the parameters and that. So that’s where I shifted from thinking about doing that research with teachers and with a multicultural focus, shifting to work strictly with the Aboriginal educators. And that’s where I became stuck, because I was not comfortable using or relying on the different methodologies I had been reading about. There are some, of course, that are friendly, like what do you call, the narrative inquiry. There are methodologies that are attentive to what I would call friendly that we can use and adapt. So, you know, and to say something is totally an Aboriginal methodology I don’t think is there. Because we’re caught up in having to write in English, so in that sense it won’t be there. We’re caught up in having to look at what’s been done before, and what’s been before have been both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal. (Missisak transcript, pp. 5-6)

Within the Western academy, conscious Indigenous researchers require two knowledge sets. One knowledge set is grounded in Western knowledge paradigms and the other is grounded in Indigenous cultures and systems of learning. Indigenous researchers constantly have to deal with criticisms about the rigor of Indigenous methodologies. Dawn Marsden shares her frustrations in the following quote:

What fires me up are the Western accusations. Like for me the whole dissertation, the whole process, it's about our ways of seeing reality and it's like, "Damn the torpedoes, damn the rigour torpedoes." You know, "Just because, you guys have no concept of these other ways of knowing or being," you know, "about the universe— it doesn't mean that they're not valid." And so the whole way that I wrote was that these are valid ways. Then I remembered the multiple purpose of it. So I'm not apologetic. At the same time, I'm very aware of the accusation of lack of rigour, because there's no recognition of spiritual ways of knowing, you know, in Western academia. And yet it's so, so real. These are whole ways of human being. And you know what? You talk to any non-Indigenous people, you know, on a deep level and they're talking about the same things, but their whole Western framework of who we are as human beings is dehumanizing to us. So it's about regaining humanity, you know, regaining who we are and all our attributes and all our abilities as human beings. There are way more abilities than are categorized in academia, you know, way more knowledge than is categorized in academia. And prayer and dreaming and our visual expression, through whatever people chose, those are so important. They're the missing pieces in *who* we are. How can we say we're developing knowledge if we cut out everything but what's physically observable? (Dawn transcript, p. 50)

Like Raven stated earlier, Indigenous methodologies and knowledge are concrete and strong enough to be challenged because they are rigorous and methodical. Because of institutional racism, there are still few Indigenous scholars' in the academy. We are struggling and persevering to do research projects in the absence of cultural mirrors, Indigenous content,

Indigenous curriculum and Indigenous mentors. Many Indigenous graduate students are designing their own courses and research programs and doing so with minimal support. It raises the question of why we pay for this?

Working with Indigenous knowledge and methodologies involve complex tasks and processes. Research relationships are long term commitments and working with Elders requires a knowledge set particular to the Elders' nation and cultural context. Non-Indigenous academics may not understand this. Although Elders are regarded within Indigenous communities with respect, academic structures create barriers and limitations to having Elders participate in a genuine manner on thesis committees. For Elders, the academic schedule can be problematic, therefore research must be flexible to ensure involvement by Indigenous communities, Elders, and people. For example, Dawn intended to include Elders on her committee but time pressures prevented that. And when I was doing a graduate research course, one of our instructors told the Indigenous students that the only elders to be on PhD committees would be those of the academy.

Knowledgeable and skilled Elders should be given a similar status to university faculty, to ensure that research by and for Indigenous peoples is undertaken, guided, and approved in ways appropriate to Indigenous worldviews and methodologies". In addition, while Elders have often guided students in their research and been credited through acknowledgements, there has been little acknowledgement of this guidance in formalized ways, in ways that would raise the intellectual capital of Indigenous peoples. The requirement to make a persuasive case for the inclusion of non-academic people on committees, prevented me from involving Elders, because of the length of time already used during completion of courses, exams and research proposal; I didn't think building a case would have been successful, quickly enough, to include Elders on my committee, in a full and respectful way, given the short time remaining for the completion of the research. (Marsden, 2005, pp. 187-188)

Considerable knowledge is required of Indigenous researchers. Working with Indigenous methodologies carries substantial responsibility and obligation. Indigenous epistemologies

derived from natural and spiritual laws instigate strong ethical practices in Indigenous knowledge production. The knowledge acquired in any search can be overwhelming and daunting, and Indigenous researchers shared their feelings about doing their best to be conscious of their own process, ethics, and protocols.

The most notorious character at the fence is the non-Indigenous gatekeeper. Indigenous researchers repeatedly voiced their frustrations with non-Indigenous gatekeepers of the academy. Institutional racism perpetuates glass ceilings and those limitations are reinforced by non-Indigenous gatekeepers who watch over the academy to ensure that you play by their rules. All the while they will remind you what a privilege it is to be in their academy attaining their degrees. The gatekeepers' role is to keep us preoccupied and distracted with defending, justifying, arguing and anything else to block our gaining a place of legitimacy, recognition and power within the academy. Power is after all never freely relinquished. The only way to not become caught is to recognize gatekeeper tactics as neocolonialism and keep asserting, integrating and standing up for Indigenous knowledges and methodologies. Gatekeepers can be draining, demoralizing, offensive, and disrespectful. Strategic searchers move past them, around them, over them, or go through them and are cautious of the trap they present. Problem solving skills, coupled with ingenuity, 'keemooch', resistance, and persistence all are strategies evidenced by Indigenous searchers here. All of the researchers had met various academic gatekeepers who they identified as impediments to actualizing Indigenous theories and Indigenous methodologies. Kishebabayquek in the following quote tells a story of the tensions she's experienced in the academy while struggling to do a thesis on her fathers' knowledge.

I looked at post-modern theories, post-colonial, I looked at feminist, standard sociology theory, and some of the phenomenology stuff, some of the narrative stuff, but they were still treating people as if you going into a situation and you're

studying something. I was studying something, I was writing about my family and I couldn't do that. At the same time that was happening, I was looking around for this theory and method that was going to fit what I wanted it...and a general idea of what I wanted...and one of my professors when I told him what I wanted to do...he just sat back and basically looked at me...and said "basically what you want to do is to write about your father." I said "ya...is there something wrong with that?" He said "oh come on Patricia" and then I realized this wasn't a favorable thing. This was a problem for him and I asked "so what problem do you have with that?" And he said "come on Patricia this is your family. You're going to write a thesis on your family?" I looked at him and I said "I want you to just close your eyes for a minute and think of me as a Canadian student walking in here with an unpublished manuscript by a traditional Ojibway, Metis man from one of the communities in this area. What response would you have?" And he just looked at me like I slapped him. I said "now I want you to think about what you just said to me and I want you to think about what I just said to you." I said "there's something wrong. If I have to be divorced from the research setting...if I have to... if any other grad student were writing about this, this wouldn't be a problem, because they're coming in from an outside perspective." I really felt so insulted. So he says something to the effect, "well there is a branch of studies where they talk about the subaltern" [her voice is questioning this word] and the subaltern speaks for something. I say when did I ever give up the responsibility that I have to speak for myself, because I didn't do that. So I thought to myself...well okay...he doesn't get it! (Kiskshekabayquek transcript, pp. 7-8)

Kishebabayquek says that her professor thought she was too close to her research because she was Indigenous and would have accepted a non-Indigenous person to write about her father. So then why is it too subjective or biased when Indigenous people write about Indigenous people: their families, communities, teachings, histories, and experiences? We must confront academic double standards because they exist to maintain the power and privilege of those who have benefited from being coined 'Indian experts'. The dominance and authority yielded by non-

Indigenous gatekeepers is problematic and some Indigenous researchers have been forced to abandon their searches because of abuse of power in the academy. Oppressive actions occur when Indigenous scholars are denied their right to cultural congruency and when Indigenous scholars have to battle every inch of the way through their search. These are problems of intolerance and power-abuse within the academy.

The university contradicts itself when it claims to be here to foster new learning and create new knowledge, and yet enforces conformity of approach. Raven found in her Master's thesis that Indigenous researchers *do operationalize* Indigenous methodologies, they just don't articulate what they do. In Indigenous contexts, it is not optional to ignore spiritual or natural laws. Despite pressures to conform, Indigenous researchers who want to integrate Indigenous methodologies into their search will, do so. But they may not identify that in text. Once again, we are forced into strategies of resistance for the ongoing survival of our ways.

In conversations I had with Indigenous researchers, I found that, like me, they were frustrated when pushed by western academics to make their research comparative. I see this meeting more the interests of Western academics. Non-Indigenous gatekeepers often push Indigenous scholars to utilize Western theories and then draw comparisons to Indigenous epistemologies, paradigms and methodologies. To push Indigenous scholars to make comparisons is problematic on two fronts:

1. the non-Indigenous gatekeepers don't have the cultural competency of Indigenous worldviews and knowledge to understand what Indigenous scholars are articulating;  
and
2. comparative analysis becomes a major distraction from the Indigenous intellectual and methodological advancements that are motivating Indigenous researchers.

Most conscious Indigenous researchers want to focus on the development of Indigenous knowledge and methodologies and to contribute to their ongoing articulation. My interest is in asserting the application and validity of Indigenous methodologies. When Indigenous researchers are working from an Indigenous theoretical and methodological standpoint, comparisons are unnecessary. Comparing Indigenous approaches with dominant research approaches is not helpful in this project and can in fact undermine it.

Earlier, I cited Dawn Hills' caution against what she calls "intellectual assimilation" (Hill, 1995). Indigenous voices across the land are echoing that we must continue to assert our knowledge and power as Indigenous peoples by speaking in our own voices and providing a space for the voices of our people to come forward. We ought not to be silenced or to be afraid to speak in our own voice for fear of reprisal or criticism. Non-Indigenous gatekeepers try to steer you in research directions you don't want to go because they don't understand or see the significance of what you want to research. The gatekeepers may see your focus as "too personal" or "too emotional" or "too subjective" – so they discourage research that appears, in their context, as non-objective. Five of the people I spoke with had professors who didn't understand the nature of their research and who said that their research was too close, too personal and they were too involved in their work. The following quote was shared in one of the conversations and reveals the discomfort and oppression experienced by Indigenous researchers.

When I think about Indigenous methodologies, I feel like my master's program is removed from that to some degree, probably to a fair degree, and mainly because I was forced, both internally thinking I was forced, and just by watching what was around me, forced into a methodology that wasn't our own, but at least wasn't overly oppressive, for lack of better words. So when I think about my master's, I think about ethnography and that history in terms of anthropology and ethnography is pretty – it isn't too nice. You'll get snippets in there about what in

my sense was real for me. And what I mean by snippets is I had to write out who I was, but it still came in, in parts. When I reflected back in other sharing circles, I participated on facilitating. That's in there, but not overtly. So that part about who I am, the participation, the ceremonies, the ceremony part to get ready to do it, the turning to ceremonies to help me keep moving, if I got stuck, for example, and all of that was present. But in terms of how to write it so that I could pass, I probably edited out - just by watching the dynamics around me [at the university]. I'm always hesitant, because - well, I'm still in the process. I did my master's and I'm doing my PhD at the same place, so I'm hesitant - and I'm working at the same place. I'm hesitant, because if I become offensive, then I'm burning bridges. So I have to watch in that way. In terms of the PhD, I still have that internal part about being really cautious. It's a little different on two ways, cautious about going too far about revealing our own thoughts and our own ways and still trying to figure out that line and what does that mean. But also cautious that if I push the envelope too far, then am I gonna be shut down. (nn, p. 3)<sup>14</sup>

Indigenous scholars in the academy talk about fear and hesitancy to do their searches in their own way or in ways that feel more congruent to their life and worldview. Many walk cautiously and are quite aware of the academic mine fields.

Non-Indigenous academics' ignorance about Indigenous peoples' histories, experiences, worldviews, theories, and methods is quite restrictive. If you don't know what you don't know, it's difficult to recognize your own level of ignorance. Yet, Indigenous searchers are subjected to academics who are not competent on Indigenous matters, yet judge and measure us using Western standards. We need the space to develop, create, search, and theorize about Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. The limitations of the academy in these matters means that Indigenous scholars often are pressured to be both learner and educator of their supervisors.

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<sup>14</sup> "nn" indicates "no name" to honour the request for anonymity

Four<sup>15</sup> of the researchers talked about the need to educate their supervisor about Indigenous perspectives, and while some supervisors are open to such opportunities, it is time consuming and draining to do this during an already demanding doctoral process.

In our lives, we have personal fences that exist because life is busy and full. Many Indigenous researchers are academic leaders, community leaders, educators, family members, spouses, parents and experience pressure for all the roles they have. With employment, community, cultural protocol, and family pressures the research itself gets pushed aside because there is no space or time to attend to the processes that require attendance – so the research process can take a long time. Doing Indigenous research requires more time with process, relationships, community, reflection, spirit, and protocols. The academy has time limits, the community has time limits, natural laws are time specific and spiritual laws are time specific. Negotiating all the time pressures and dissonances isn't easy and at times the researchers couldn't have Elders on their committee because of time constraints. Being Indigenous in this society also infers complicated lives. Stressors of life as Indigenous people can complicate the search process as many people may also be coping with extended family issues, life and death situations and health issues. It is no secret that being Aboriginal in Canada is complicated with stressful experiences because of racism, colonialism, politics, poverty, discrimination, stereotyping and basically living in climates of intolerance and injustice. Do we occupy a blockade or work on the dissertation? Do we attend ceremonies or work on the dissertation? They are all part of the whole and so we consciously make choices on a daily basis of where we engage and place our energy. I agree with Raven, who said, at times it'd be quicker to do research that was non-involved and detached. That really isn't an option though because once

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<sup>15</sup> Their names are withheld to honour their anonymity.

knowledge is achieved you can't go back to ignorance. It is often not an option to walk away from a project because of the involvement of Spirit, community, Elders and the importance of the work.

The journey from the head to the heart is said to be the longest journey one might take. Searches for knowledge using Indigenous methodologies are often spirit and heart driven. They are not easy journeys. Often the methodologies emerge organically as the search process unfolds. The process can be fluid and difficult to articulate. This is not to say that our methodologies cannot be articulated, just that it is challenging. Text is often not enough and many Indigenous researchers are challenged with issues of knowledge translation related to Indigenous concepts, experiences, languages and processes. Diverse mediums are often required for creative representations which might include the arts, visuals, video, graphics, songs, poetry, prose or storytelling.

### *Allies and the Committee*

All of the researchers struggled with the dominant nature of Western methodologies. Most Indigenous searchers seem to begin with Western methodologies and then integrate Indigenous processes. Anti-colonial, critical, feminist, multicultural, and Indigenous critiques have introduced new and relevant theories and epistemologies of research to include socio-political and historically critical perspectives. Some methodologies that are regarded as relevant are action oriented, participatory, and community based methodologies. Narrative, lived experience, and phenomenological methodologies have supported our goals of establishing an Indigenous voice in the research story. As I stated in Chapter Two, it is important to acknowledge the contributions of these allied research efforts that have opened doorways to further identify and articulate Indigenous methodologies. Allies are essential in a struggle to find

your own way and when they are present, a wise person would take time to notice what they have to offer and consider if the offering is useful and applicable. Understandably, we walk with caution though. The danger seems to be in accepting theories and methodologies that are after all still cloaked in colonialism – albeit softer forms of colonialism.

The danger of routing Indigenous discourses exclusively into Western social science doctrines is that the more inclusive context of the Indigenous Peoples' experience and the right of Indigenous People to name their own experience according to their worldview will once again be marginalized. (Ermine, 2000, p. 85)

Allies can and have supported conscious Indigenous graduate searchers. The Indigenous researchers I spoke to and read for this thesis acknowledged the allies who too resist the oppressive nature of dominant research methodologies. Twelve of the fifteen researchers drew eclectically to varying degrees on allied theories and methodologies. Allied methodologies became a springboard from which a leap was made toward asserting the rightful place of Indigenous methodologies in Indigenous knowledge production. Fewer Indigenous researchers began by asserting Indigenous methodology. Here Michael Hart gives an example:

In light of the participatory nature of ethnography, utilizing this approach also supported me in meeting the previously highlighted points. First, I was able to include my own, as well as the participants', subjective views. Second, I was able to fully involve myself as a participant. Third, I was able to incorporate reflection, insight, and personal experiences. (Hart, 1997, p. 103)

Dawn Hill also wrote about her deliberations:

Is there any room in social analysis for the Native method or should I twist reality to fit the language and consciousness of the oppressor as Lorde states? In terms of exactly which method, I used both. Operating in the material world, I used video and tape recorders to conduct one-to-one interviews even though who I interviewed and when may have been spiritually and culturally guided. ... The interviews in the Lubicon section [are] directly transcribed from the audio tapes. The collection of interviews is structured according to families and kinships systems. (Hill, 1995, p. 27)

Laara Fitznor sought out allied theories and ended up modifying qualitative methods to fit more within Indigenous contexts. She states, “I adapted qualitative methodologies (pilot study – own observations; questionnaire that was grounded in Aboriginal context; group interview – sharing circles; interviews – conversations) that were relevant to this group” (Fitznor, 2002b, pp. 59-60). Laara, in her thesis illustrated some of the similarities between Indigenous and allied methods, for example, between a sharing circle and a focus group.

Undeniably, our ancestors have a rich tradition of searching for knowledge and have the tools and ways of doing this. Our methodologies are concrete and strong enough to guide our knowledge production today, as they did with our grandparents and greatgrandparents. Eber stated that “[o]ne of the ways that I think of Indigenous people around the world and myself as an Indigenous person – is that we’re relatively close to our old cultures – we’re relatively close in time and in generations to our traditions of being human” (Eber transcript, p. 21), and we are not so far removed from this knowledge. Yet, today our context is different and we are not alone in our struggles. I believe we need to strive to make Indigenous methodologies central with allied theories and methods as secondary. This raises the question to what degree is the inclusion of eurotheorist and allies considered? Peter Cole (2000) stated he included the voices of eurotheorists to have a balance in his dissertation. I disagree with his decision because eurotheorists have not recorded the need for balanced scholarship by including the voices and scholarship of Indigenous peoples. It also insinuates that our scholarship is imbalanced if we choose to not include the work of eurotheorists. Peter Cole also stated that he chose to include eurotheorists whose work was in alliance / allegiance / in support / of Indigenous peoples or

those who wrote in a respectful way. I find this a more valid reason for including eurowestern references which support our work. Peter chose:

certain ones who had edited collections of our words in respectful ways  
 others who had left our words unmanaged within their own work our research  
 and those adopted into indigenous communities lives geographies  
 and those who “try to move outside normal ‘regimes’  
 of academic / professional academic discourses,  
 in search of less-well-colonized spaces, where Other things can be said  
 ...where other things can be said Differently (Cole, 2000, p. 22)

Today I consciously privilege Indigenous authors as a political and academic act of validation and goal to ‘lift up’ Indigenous knowledge. My aim is to position Indigenous scholars as voices of authority regarding Indigenous issues because as Laara Fitznor said, “I found that there were Aboriginal scholars who were problematizing western mainstream ways of doing research while rekindling and asserting Aboriginal / Indigenous paradigms” (Fitznor, 2002b, p. 60).

### *The Committee*

Academic support is essential for Indigenous searchers who assert their location and positionality in their research projects and employ Indigenous methodologies within the academy. Indigenous searchers stated how much they appreciated and valued support received from Indigenous faculty, even in other institutions. Indigenous faculty offer culturally relevant support and their presence on committees provide role models and cultural mirrors that are often absent. Few Indigenous researchers yet have the benefit of an all Indigenous committee, and so non-Indigenous allies within the academy play a paramount role. All the Indigenous researchers’ in my search had committee comprised of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty. Supportive non-Indigenous faculty can be helpful to the “success” of Indigenous researchers employing Indigenous methodologies, within the academy. Every Indigenous researcher talked about supportive non-Indigenous allies within the academy. The support received from

Indigenous and non-Indigenous faculty must not be underestimated. Michael, in our conversation talked about this:

At the same time, there's a small group of people that are supportive. And the way they're trying to be supportive is by making room, so that they're trying not to impose things. I believe people who are on my committee are trying to do that. (Michael transcript, p. 14)

Ultimately within the academy we must work with academics who understand colonialism and who can "act as gatekeepers of knowledge in order to ensure that Western European thought be kept in its appropriate place" (Duran & Duran, 2000, p. 88). Some of these gatekeepers are scholars whose research assists us to open doorways and understand institutions we must navigate. Some are opening gateways and their presence on our committees or in the academy assist with opening doorways and windows to create 'methodological space' so Indigenous researchers can do their work. They facilitate space and respectfully do not impose contradictory requirements of Western theories or methodologies. Maggie, in our conversation talks about how important her committee was in helping to create space:

Why I feel really grateful about my process is that I was fortunate to have people on my committee who said to me, "Do what you need to do, Maggie. We've got your back." And structurally, from a university perspective, one of the things that I believe that was helpful to me is that on my committee I had the Dean of Education, I had the Director of Social Work, and I had Leroy Little Bear. And so I had senior people, who have been around and who could give me that space. (Maggie transcript, p. 21)

Committee members may have the authority to create 'academic space' for Indigenous process and methodologies to emerge. Maggie's committee supported her to go home to do her research. The possibility this creates for Indigenous researchers to work in a congruent manner is crucial.

It provides a space to breath, to be in your process where your spirit and heart can have life. That space means you don't have to leave your identity, culture, and worldview at the door. It means you can remain congruent and thrive as an Indigenous scholar. In that space, you don't have to waste your time or energy arguing, explaining, justifying or defending your worldview, or why you're doing what you're doing. This frees up spiritual, psychological, emotional, and mental energy to grow and develop. If you are consumed with defending and arguing, then you are in basic survival mode and not able to grow.

The make-up of a researchers' doctoral committee is of crucial importance and some participants made strategic decisions about their committee because the thesis takes years of work and committee support can diminish or enhance your progress. Several of the researchers I had conversations with talked about the number of committee members they went through to find a committee that would support and work with them. Some researchers replaced an antagonistic committee member or even changed academic programs when faced with wasting valuable time dealing with unsupportive and even antagonistic committee members. One participant shared her experience with valuable time wasted.

So one of my advisors after six months admitted to me that he couldn't support this kind of research because of the political situation, that it was under threat, even though he was currently supporting a couple other dissertations. His main focus was to – I think it was to turn mine into an anthropological, another anthropological work, where he wanted me to look at the content of traditional ceremonies. And, you know, that's not my place. And, you know, like for me it was about looking at the framework, like "What supports are there? What are the structures and the barriers in the political realm?" Yeah. So that was difficult, because it wasted, you know, half a year for me. (Dawn transcript, p. 40)

Alternatively, respectful and supportive committee members in positions of power are helpful in navigating the academy's bureaucratic hoops. I have been fortunate to have non-Indigenous allies as committee members who rather than insist on irrelevant Western criteria use their position of authority to expand the parameters, definitions, interpretations of academic research and policy. Indigenous researchers need to constructively talk about their thesis, receive appropriate feedback, have appropriate challenges and receive support.

### ***Writing Oral Traditions and Other Ironies***

Academic writing presents challenges for Indigenous research contexts for reasons related to language and oral traditions. Four of the larger issues that were identified were related to:

1. academic writing and creating hybrid languages;
2. what to include in written text ;
3. translation of knowledge, concepts and language; and
4. representation of knowledge.

Gatekeepers uphold western forms of academic writing and often force Indigenous scholars to write in a particular manner for the academy, which is often a non-Indigenous audience.

Michael Marker, further states that:

One of the central problems for Indigenous intellectuals is that words – in English – are presently owned by an academic culture that has some consensus on the legitimate definition of these terms and activities. Indigenous scholars must either invent new words and then struggle upstream against the prevailing current to wedge them into the academic lexicon, or expand the meaning of conventional terms to include Indigenous perspective. This means seizing a word and saying, “this is what we meant when we say science, or epistemology, or respectful methodology.” (Marker, 2004, p. 103)

We need to create words and language that accurately reflect our intentions and are meaningful to the Indigenous audiences we write for. Writing for a non-indigenous audience can take the form of changing your language to English, changing the tone, white washing your findings or changing your terminology. It creates pressure to fragment your information by creating themes and categories, thus forming a reduced and decontextualized analysis. Whereas Indigenous approaches would keep stories and voices within a holistic context and let the readers make their own conclusions and interpretations. Gatekeepers push you to write in non-Indigenous ways, in terms of how you write and what you write. When writing for non-Indigenous audiences, the gatekeepers may require very descriptive writing justifying and explaining Indigenous methodologies or they will want you to be explaining the basics which limits Indigenous scholarship to introductory concepts.

Eber talked about keeping in mind that sense of audience; who we write for as we communicate our research. He said:

[A] real important part to research is the communication – is the conversation – is the publishing – is the communicating sharing knowledge. And so I guess the one way I think we are, as Indigenous researchers who are in the process of inventing or reinventing Indigenous research or claiming it – even claiming that tool – is by treating each other as our audience. So if we're actually writing to Indigenous people – the extent to which I'm actually writing to Indigenous people – I think that's one way that automatically changes the research. That sense of audience.  
(Eber transcript, p. 12)

Our educational and research goals are evidently self-directed and aimed at gaining a deeper understanding and of our experiences from our locations. If our goals are to emancipate ourselves and contribute to Indigenous knowledge production that benefits

us, naturally then our commitment is to write for an Indigenous audience. What to write and how to write it leads to other considerations and challenges.

Discerning what is okay to write about and what is not okay to write about, in the academy, are ethical and strategic decisions made throughout the search process. As Dawn Marsden says:

We're trying so hard to break new ground in the academy, but we have to do it carefully. And there were other strategic decisions that were made about this dissertation in that same vein, because there is this whole about – one of the biggest attacks against Indigenous research is rigorousness and validity. So that was a consideration. It wasn't in an oppressive censoring kind of way, it was definitely in kind of a strategic defensive kind of way. (p. 20)...

Some of them had to do with spirituality as the basis of Indigenous, traditional based knowledge and stories that supported that. Like there's a whole realm of conversations and I would say all of the decisions – were influenced by the group that I was working with, research group, individually and in multiplicity. One of the decisions was to take out references to some of the beings that we know about, that wouldn't be strategic to put into the dissertation, because that's another conversation that will have to take place later. And not only do we have this fundamental spiritually based view of reality, where everything is connected through spirits, but that means that through spirit there are these other beings, both spirit and manifest, that are walking around. So all those discussions about ... and all the terms and terminologies for people who walk between the worlds, that, for people who aren't human and aren't the beings that most Western Canadians are familiar with, yet they influenced the process and influenced what was said, yet we left them out. (Dawn transcript, p. 22)

We are careful to not remove certain knowledge and teachings from their context and into the academy. There are two reasons: One is that non-Indigenous academics, as Dawn points out, are not familiar with certain phenomena. Second, we are careful about how we write because

non-Indigenous gatekeepers tend to take our critiques of colonialism personally and become defensive urging a rewording to soften the stance.

Writing within the academy is difficult as I search for words, phrases, analogies, metaphors and language to describe my worldview and the meaning I ascribe to it. Although I know I am capable, it's the making meaning of my thoughts in English grammar that gives me trouble. Even though my first language is not Anishinaabe, it was my mothers' and she transmitted her worldview through her communication to my siblings and me. Consequently, my worldview is Anishinaabe, yet my language is English. Many of the researchers, too, felt the limitations of the academy to receive 'our' way of coming into knowledge. Winona says just do it and write from where you are at. Dawn Hill talked about the challenges of writing about the Lubicon peoples' reality in her study.

How can one describe a community experiencing war when there are not firearms visible? How can you describe the casualties when the bombs the corporation and government drop are considered development? How can you describe and participate in a society where the entire community is traumatized? Again, words seem inadequate. The only possible solution is to pose the Lubicon people themselves as the authority, the voice, the story tellers. (Hill, 1995, p. 24)

Dawn also articulated what, I believe, many Indigenous researchers anguish over while writing:

Trying to remember all that I had seen and heard, I wondered how I was going to write about my involvement in these ceremonies and closed political meetings. My role as researcher had been redefined by the Lubicon. They had shared so much with me; they had included me in their lives. How was I to remove myself from these events in order to construct a presentation that revealed intimate thoughts of the spiritual beliefs of these people? They had revealed so much to me that was sacred and profound. How could this relationship be translated into the white man's world? As I listened to the drums I pondered these questions, feeling so very lost between many worlds...Chief Hubert Buck sat with me for awhile. I told him of my dilemma and he responded, "Write the truth, that's all". So simple was his answer I had to laugh at myself. (Hill, 1995, pp. 93-94)

Peter Cole talked about why he transported his dissertation in a canoe and described his language usage as an "anti-colonial isomorphing of stories and epistemologies from indigenous language

into English and back.” (Cole, 2000, p. iii). Leanne Simpson discussed in depth the issues of textualizing Indigenous knowledge and transforming oral into written.

Once Indigenous Knowledge has been filtered through western conceptual models and definitions and constructed into TEK, it is textualized. The textualization process has the effect of mis-translating knowledge across perceived conceptual universals, transforming the knowledge from process to product, de-contextualizing the knowledge, de-personalizing knowledge by separating it from the people, and transferring authority from the people to the content of the text. Textualization ultimately produces Indigenous Knowledge in a form that is completely accessible to the mainstream society... Indigenous knowledge cannot be separated from the people. The people cannot be separated from the land. (Simpson, 1999, pp. 81-82)

Eurocentric thinking perpetuates the belief that something is not valid unless it's written down.

Yet, Indigenous values are reflected in Indigenous languages in oral contexts. The translation of language, content and concepts sometimes require more explanation and description. Indigenous languages, we know, are largely descriptive and verb based and reflects a particular worldview.

English reflects European worldview and, at times, is inadequate to articulate Indigenous methodologies, philosophies, and concepts.

When I began to delve into the topic of First Nations orality, the first contradiction that I faced focused on the fact that I had to complete a Ph.D. thesis, academic work steeped in literacy and analysis, on the topic of First Nations orality, presumably based on aural/oral delivery. (Archibald, 1997, p. 8)

Issues of authority and translation plague Indigenous scholars who are faced with translating oral traditions into written text and where living stories that were once heard take on the stillness of the written word. Winona (Stevenson, 2000) states that our challenge is to transcend the influences of structuralism, modernism, objectiveness or otherness and to deny colonial representations of Indigenous peoples and cultures. She writes that we need to have opportunities to 're- imagine and re-express' the oral into the written and to find ways to "vivify the text" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 19). I really like that Winona calls words that are full of meaning

and connotation 'bundle words' and these are words that have a philosophy behind them. We use and create bundle words in English in an attempt to translate knowledge, concepts and contexts. We must resist falling into internalized colonialism and we must reemerge in our stories. For example, "[a] literal translation of 'truth' from English to Cree is tâpwêwin. But like most attempts at translation tâpwêwin means far more in Cree. It is one of those 'bundle' words that comes attached with deep open-ended philosophical understandings" (Stevenson, 2000, p. 252).

Translating the oral into the written is paradoxical too. Jo-ann shares her dilemma in the following quote:

I felt at a disadvantage because I do not know the Hul'qumi'num language enough to appreciate the connotated meanings. I noted that I should examine further the problems related to language differences, especially with translation and changes of word/concepts meaning with Ellen and other storytellers who are fluent in an Aboriginal language. (Archibald, 1997, p. 88)

Many of the Indigenous searchers discussed the contradictions of telling or describing oral histories in written English and how inappropriate it was to have to use English to describe Indigenous worldviews and contexts. Patricia described her struggle to tell her father's stories, and argued that telling his story was as legitimate research process as is scientific fact. She described her thesis as a hybrid of how she was taught to speak culturally with how she is expected to write academically. We tend to create hybrids and characterize them as Indian English.

Some academics may refer to this study as the subaltern speaks, as this supposedly specifies that the people who are usually studied, the Other, has developed the capacity to speak for one's community. I differ. In this study, there is a recognition that this story and other similar Indigenous based stories must be told. If we are to meet our responsibilities to future generations, we have to use available contemporary tools to ensure that these stories, told from our perspectives, live on. They can offer a counterbalance to the historical records and add to the development of Indigenous-based written theories and methods.

Given the oral tradition of Indigenous storytelling, this may seem a contradiction, as is my writing in English. (McGuire, 2003, p. 17)

The challenge of translating from visual and oral into written English is an interesting one we grapple with, and I have seen in the theses how that challenge was creatively dealt with. The researchers wrote in prose, told stories, used poetry, integrated voice and personal narratives. I enjoyed reading the dissertations as most of them included personal voice and narrative. It was like reading languages that blend English with Indigenous worldviews. Indigenous people who use only English, “do so in a distinctly Indian way, so that some knowledge of cultural communication patterns is requisite to an understanding of conversations” (Stevenson, 2000, p. 17). I have often referred to myself as orally dyxlesic and Winona, talks about non-fluent speakers who are also insiders who “have the kinship links necessary to reintegrate and learn, and to varying degrees have internalized cultural communication patters” (Stevenson, 2000, p. 17).

Clearly, we write consciously to not compromise, sacrifice or lose significant knowledge, understandings and teachings as we translate between languages and contexts. Patricia wrote that within her literature search there was no historical verification of Anishinaabek identity and that most studies deal primarily with negative social indicators of Indigenous peoples. The lack of accurate Indigenous representation is an issue when, as Patricia stated, “nothing reflected either my reality in the world or how I negotiated my path” (McGuire, 2003, p. 7). None of the researchers wrote as dispassionate objective observers, when their searches were rooted in the personal and subjective. In fact, all of the Indigenous researchers were acutely conscious of how they represented their search, despite the issues that academia and writing presents.

Representation, for Indigenous scholars, is not just a question of academic validity; it is also a question of family, community, and nation integrity. So audience becomes inherently

involved when we begin to consider communicating our findings and all of the researchers considered representation integral to how they presented their search. We want our work to speak to Indigenous people, not just academics. These issues are related to location being consciously responsible in how we write about our searches. These are not light issues. We often write one way, but are pressured to write another and yet “we are aware of the criteria for being accepted and offered full membership into the exclusive club of Western academia. The concern I have is what we must sacrifice to join this club” (McGuire, 2003, p. 20).

Leanne grappled with the irony of representing live and dynamic features of traditional knowledge that she received from the Elders. Documenting a knowledge that is really active, personal and creative becomes difficult when written text appropriates that voice and freezes that knowledge in a particular time and context. We must be very careful with documenting traditional knowledge because it makes it more accessible to non-aboriginal peoples for mis-use and mis-representation, which can be damaging to Indigenous peoples in Canada. So Leanne made conscious decisions not document certain things, such as: Anishinaabe environmental knowledge; descriptive accounts of her community experiences; or reports done with the community because all that knowledge needed to remain in the community. From this, I learnt that writing oral traditions becomes an issue of not only what we choose to include, but also what we exclude.

Initially, transcribed interviews were to appear in this dissertation. It was a constant worry to me. Above all else, I didn't want to hurt the people who had shared so much with me. By taking their words, and publishing them in my dissertation, I was also assuming responsibility for the knowledge. I was making it accessible to the dominant society, and there were no guarantees that this knowledge would not be used at a latter [later] date against the community. I came to the realization that I could not ethically publish those transcripts. (Simpson, 1999, p. 86)

The conflicts, as Leanne says, arise around what we feel is ethical to publish or not. Intolerance or antagonisms are reported by Indigenous researchers when trying to write in our own way. There were other academic pressures such as guilt, different approaches to learning, reducing knowledge, and time constraints. One researcher identified feeling guilty and Jo-ann shared this:

Some of my uneasiness of guilt feelings are also based on the possibility of financial gain. I benefit from this research work by completing a thesis, thereby obtaining a university degree which could influence my career and possibly my financial earnings. The guilt arises because I see how many of our Elders and cultural people live: near poverty, yet, they are the ones with the high degree of cultural knowledge. (Archibald, 1997, p. 68)

Regarding academic pressures Peter had to change his abstract in order for his dissertation to be accepted because of the prose it was written in. An interesting contradiction given his defense was successful. He wrote:

it seems the forces of colonization are ever at work  
 even in terms of format now the very shape of my knowings must be  
 transformed  
 must adhere to what is acceptable to dissertation abstracts international  
 a clearing house a data base cognitive head quarters international for *res  
 academica*  
 I append below my original abstract together with an email  
 from the graduate chair of education at simon fraser university  
 who let me know why it was not acceptable as *was/is*  
 I choose to not file analyze or interpret the letter he sent together with  
 a supporting one from mr enrique cruz but I am curious at the choice of mr cruz  
 providing me with as acceptable exemplars one being the ed d abstract  
 of a document written by wendy ellen burton...  
 ...I certainly hope that that example is of an aboriginal woman writing a thesis...  
 ...I think it is time that what is constructed as being 'acceptable'  
 move from western epistemological deemedness in terms of 'correct'  
 to a place in which other cultures besides western academic ones  
 are welcomed into the conversation

colonialism imperialism consumerism these have been given much space and time  
 many millions of books have been created in these camps of western  
 intellectualism

it is time that universities and governments and business moved from places of racism to places of shared partnership. (Cole, 2000, p. 318)

Like Peter, Indigenous researchers who attempt to counter western methods seem to experience a certain degree of backlash and intolerance within the academy. Michael Hart wrote about the possibility of his research being criticized because he may not have appeared objective or distant enough. He talked of Aboriginal science and the notion of epistemological humility, which I really liked.

wholistic learning is a requirement of Aboriginal science. If I maintained distance from the participants, informants, and events on the ground that I was avoiding “going native”, I would not be exercising epistemological humility. I may even be falling into Gilchrist’s (1994) concern of internalized colonialism. (Hart, 1997, p. 123)

Some of the researchers expressed frustration with the ‘expert’ syndrome which academia prides itself on. For example, Dawn Marsden, in our conversation and in her dissertation identified some difficulty writing about traditional knowledge in an academic context and feeling pressure to write for publication and to become the ‘expert’. I thought it significant that she discussed her resistance to the importance imparted to individual authors when she discussed in her thesis, the genealogy of concepts. This idea acknowledges that over time concepts and knowledge are collectively developed by many people. People have discussions, meetings, counsel, and make interpretations and meanings of the knowledge they acquire. In other words, knowledge has a genealogy of its own. And Dawn Marsden expressed a resistance to acknowledging only one author when there are accumulations of people contributing to someone’s knowledge and to cite the one person who wrote about it – negates those Elders and teachers who contributed to the knowledge.

I am also insulted by the implied assumptions that I cannot arrive at ideas or conclusions without reference to a published author. ... The attempt in this

dissertation was to use my own ethical responses to academic pressures to ascertain difference, conflict and relationship between the desires of the academy and my integrity as an Indigenous graduate student. (Marsden, 2005, p. 57)

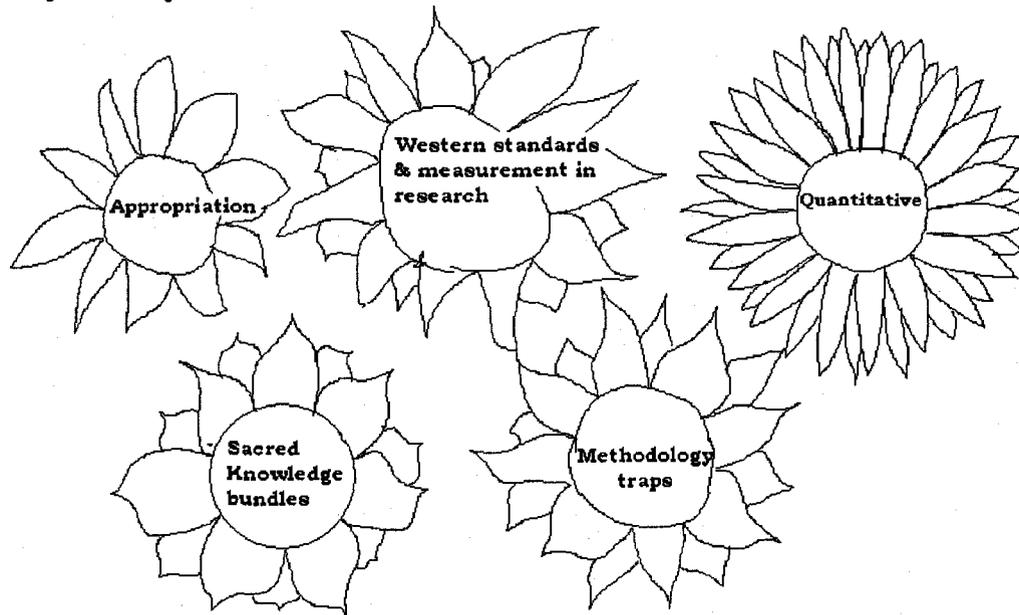
A final irony is that we write about building community, reconnecting and collectivity, yet we write about these in isolation and alone. Writing a dissertation is a lonely exercise and bringing other voices in helps to break our isolation and build collective consciousness.

Integrating Indigenous peoples' voices into my dissertation was a commitment to acknowledge Indigenous traditions of orality, but in written text. We write about reconnecting and rebuilding community and paradoxically do it in isolation. We try to convey collective stories and experiences in isolation, which seems contradictory. Despite the alienating conditions of writing a dissertation, we anguish in isolation finding comfort that a broader sharing of the harvest or dissemination of information will bring balance. Michael and I, in our conversation, speculated on Indigenous scholars engaging with each other to do joint dissertations.

Writing about oral traditions and other ironies involves making judgements and strategic decisions as we negotiate the complexities of the issues. Frustrations, antagonisms, and conflicts are a part of the search experience in the academy. Articulating these experiences and perspectives will hopefully create awareness and change so that Indigenous researchers don't always have to be submitting to academic dominance.

## *Thorny Prickly Challenges*

### **Thorny Prickly Ones**



What do you do if the flowers have thorny prickles, aren't as nice or are too beautiful to pick?

By Kathy Absolon, 2006

**Figure 16.** Thorny prickly illustration.

These thorny prickly challenges are those bits and pieces that are difficult to grasp, need be left alone, too tricky to touch, and leave us feeling uncertain. All the researchers identified thorny prickly challenges as they shared their experiences. I believe the difficult issues we shared are also developmental. As Indigenous methodologies are articulated and worked out, clarity emerges and so does wisdom. My goal here is to identify some of the challenge that arise, and not offer answers because I believe clarity will emerge for each person as their our work progresses. Some of the challenges explored are negotiating our dualities, dealing with spirituality and sacred knowledge, knowledge extraction and appropriation, methodological traps and quantitative methodologies.

Employing Indigenous methodologies within a constrictive academic environment leaves us, at times, in agony and conflict. The experience of being torn-between-two worlds or pulling into two different directions, is I think a form of what Wa Thiong'o identifies as "an existential human anguished condition" (1986, p. 22). When we live in a world that rejects our humanity and identity, we end up doing odd forms of emotional and mental gymnastics to compensate and cope. It creates a split in our minds between who we feel and think we are and how society perceives and treats us resulting in states of distress and dis-ease. Cajete (2000) claims that in order to honour our humanity and heal this split in our minds, we must acknowledge the human being in ourselves toward a reconciliation of self. Reconciling the dualities of our realities cultivates an ambidextrous consciousness (Little Bear, 2000). Having an ambidextrous consciousness means being able to productively negotiate two realities / abilities at once. Knowing both an Aboriginal worldview and a Euro-western worldview and mentally moving between both worlds on a daily basis requires such an ambidextrous consciousness. A very appropriate metaphore for this is having your feet in two canoes and maintaining a balance in both. Indigenous researchers talk with pride about our ability to maintain this balance and our bicultural understanding of two knowledge sets in two worldviews. These dual knowledge sets create within us a unique hybrid knowledge. Doing Indigenous anything within a western European context entails naming and dealing with our dualities while affirming our bi-cultural orientations.

Spirituality in the research process is a considerable challenge. Dawn and Leanne were quoted earlier about these challenges. Indigenous researchers query whether or not to include certain spirits and sacred knowledge because writing about such things can be controversial. As discussed, Indigenous searchers respond to these issues by making strategic decisions on what to

omit and what to include in their descriptions of their research process, and often exclude references to sacred beings and sacred knowledge of the spiritual realm. Some identify their process, but do not describe it in the dissertation. Indigenous researchers continue to search for an ethical and strategic balance to acknowledge the spirit of / in their work. Some check in with their Elders and traditional teachers to achieve this ethical balance.

Indigenous researchers likely have different perspectives regarding what sacred knowledge to share. Not all Indigenous knowledge and methodologies are meant to be articulated within academic text. Some flowers are rare and precariously beautiful, and the urge to pick them is there – but should we? Some need to remain in their context because that's where their beauty and power comes from. Willie reiterated that point clearly in our conversation. To extract them would be to disempower and dismember them. With this in mind, there are sacred knowledge bundles that should not be recorded in academic search projects. We have some powerful knowledge keepers and medicine peoples who hold sacred bundles and means to sacred knowledge. Eber, in our conversation stated, that there are more ways of knowing than can be categorized within the academy. What we articulate within the academy is only a fraction of the knowledge that exists within Indigenous peoples' cultures and traditions. Some things that are documented can lose their essence when they are decontextualized. What is defined as a sacred knowledge bundle may be unclear and requires guidance from sacred knowledge holders for guidance. There are many methods to access this knowledge and not all are appropriate for academic research contexts. I believe we need to receive guidance from Elders and sacred knowledge keepers regarding the inclusion of such knowledge in academic text.

Knowledge extraction and appropriation are also prickly issues. For decades non-Indigenous people have done Indigenous research on and about Indigenous peoples. Today, we encourage collaboration, partnerships, and protocol agreements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. Indigenous people do Indigenous research. But, can only Indigenous people employ Indigenous methodologies? Are methodological groundings of Indigenous worldviews, paradigms, knowledge and experiences accessible only to Indigenous peoples? This controversial question arose from time to time. Can non-Indigenous people use Indigenous methodologies? Some people would just leave that flower alone and let it be. Out of context the methodological meaning and holistic process is lost. If an Indigenous worldview is a foundational tendency for the articulation and practice of Indigenous methodologies, then I question whether people who lack an Indigenous worldview, history, experiences and spirit can accurately represent an Indigenous methodology. Dawn Marsden and I talked about this issue in our conversation and she said:

Doing Indigenous methodologies has to be from ones' Indigenous knowing. The other thing is people said, "Oh, well, can anyone use this Wampum Research Model?" And I'm still unresolved about that in myself, because there's the whole – I've seen so many Indigenous ways and things taken out of context, disconnected, just like the stories. They lose meaning and they lose like the whole embeddedness in the sacred. And so there's a very real danger of non-Indigenous people doing Indigenous research. But at the same time, I think non-Indigenous people can adopt Indigenous methodologies if they're doing it in a good way, in good relationships with the people they're doing it with and with full recognition, acknowledgement of the genealogy of that knowledge.

Like I'm finding more and more Indigenous ways being referenced without actually naming them as Indigenous. In the one sense, like Indigenous people don't own all these ways. You know, these are the ways of good life, the ways to

live a good life. And a lot of the values, especially, are embedded within all kinds of different doctrines across the world. So if someone were to take the Wampum Research Model and use it in a totally non-Indigenous setting, I would say that was inappropriate. So it's about making appropriate choices for appropriate settings and appropriate groups of people. (Dawn transcript, p. 61)

Indigenous methodologies require situational appropriateness, which means that they can only be actualized when the whole context is appropriate and relevant. The whole petal flower and its environment create the context for Indigenous research methodologies. Non-Indigenous people can employ some shared elements such as respect, community benefit, relationship building and so on, but might not locate from similar cultural, spiritual, historical, personal, or political experiences as an Indigenous methodology would entail. Situational appropriateness then asks the questions: do you have an Indigenous worldview, history and experiences? Can you position your process in an Indigenous epistemology and framework? Do your practices reflect an Indigenous worldview? If you can answer yes to these questions then perhaps one has situational appropriateness to employ Indigenous methodologies and if the answers are no, then perhaps one doesn't. It is important for us to be as specific as we can about our methodologies so that others who are traveling academic corridors and searching in the methodological maze may see Indigenous landmarks so they don't get lost in the academy. We need to leave our footprints as clearly as we can. We need to be as clear as we can about our motives and purpose and to articulate and share as much as we can about how we went about searching for the knowledge we gather.

Without critical knowledge, searchers could be trapped by the academic requirement of confidentiality. Standardizing confidentiality is problematic for Indigenous searchers. Sometimes, confidentiality goes against culturally appropriate ways of acknowledging the

genealogy of knowledge. In oral traditions, people often spend time acknowledging who and where they received their teachings from. Who they received a story or song from and where they accumulated their knowledge. Acknowledging the people, animals, or other realms as sources of our knowledge maintains the holistic and respectful nature of knowledge production. In some cases, however, confidentiality is important where personal information or emotionally sensitive information is being gathered for academic work. For Indigenous researchers the appropriateness of confidentiality will depend on context. I was really pleased to find a recent article that debunked myths related to the ethics and the Tri-Council Policy Statements. The “Myths about Qualitative Research and the Tri-Council Policy Statement” is a good reference tool to have as Carolyn Ells and Shawna Gutfreud made it a point to debunk eight myths related to ethics and qualitative research. The first myth was that anonymity must be guaranteed and sources kept confidential. “Yet contrary to this “requirement”, qualitative researchers are aware that some research participants wish to be identified. Participants may have an additional motive in participating in the research that requires their identity to be disclosed” (Ells & Gutfreud, 2006, p. 364). This article also recognizes that written consent forms may be culturally inappropriate and incompatible with certain methodologies, that the format of consent can vary, and all that risks and benefits need not be known in advance (Ells & Gutfreud, 2006).

Finally, there are some flowers that just look different so people leave them alone. Because I reviewed search projects in the humanities, quantitative methodologies were not used by the searchers and came up only once in a discussion with Raven. I know there are quantitative studies in geography, environmental studies and ecology. The researchers did not address issues of whether quantitative methodologies can be Indigenous methodologies, although Raven alluded to the possibilities. The use of Indigenous methodologies in quantitative studies

is an area for further study. Certainly, Indigenous searchers would benefit to learn about statistical research and its application to particular fields such as the health sciences. Indigenous health research projects are one example of search fields where quantitative methodologies could be important. We will likely see more application of Indigenous search ethics in quantitative research health science as the Indigenous Peoples Health Research Centre in Saskatchewan,<sup>16</sup> for example, progresses, especially in the context of the increasing controversial research relating to blood sampling, DNA sampling and genetics that Raven mentioned.

My research highlights the work of Indigenous graduate researchers who have completed and are completing the arduous journeys of conscious Indigenous thesis research. Having such role models provides inspiration, hope and encouragement that we are growing in our discourse and presence. Academies are slowly changing and recognizing Indigenous ways of searching for knowledge. The leadership of other Indigenous academics has made our paths less rugged and we are encouraged to continue. They have shared their stories about their searches and have helped us along, supporting us generously. Each time I hear of another Indigenous researcher completing their search using their methodologies, I know that change is here.

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<sup>16</sup> The Indigenous Peoples Health Research Centre is a joint initiative of the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Regina and the First Nations University of Canada. Their website is [www.iphrc.ca](http://www.iphrc.ca)

## Chapter Twelve: Concluding Remarks

“What is there to conclude?  
The work continues...  
There are still stories to be shared  
Knowledge to learn  
Methodologies to articulate  
We are not finished  
The journey continues...  
How we come to know is our journey...  
Our search for knowledge...  
Searches and travelers continue...  
I am one of them...  
Beginnings and endings do not exist  
Baamaapii gawaabmin...”

(K. Absolon, 2007)

The goal of my search was to examine graduate research by Indigenous researchers who employed methodologies informed by Indigenous knowledge and traditions. Although, I acknowledge allied theories and methodologies and many Indigenous researchers are doing useful research in alliance with euro-western approaches, they were not the focus. When I started my doctoral journey, I felt that eurowestern theories of searching have been imposed upon Indigenous scholars for far too long. The significance of articulating how Indigenous researchers in the academy are searching is critical to Indigenous research. By unveiling Indigenous methods of knowledge production we legitimize our presence and the academy can no longer deny, ignore, negate or dismiss this presence. There are many lessons taken from this work and each reader will claim their own based on their context and needs. My hope is that this collective knowledge bundle inspires Indigenous researchers in their graduate academic searches and fuels change within the academy regarding the presence of Indigenous research methodologies.

I know the pathway to emancipation is in reclaiming our own ways of knowing, being, and doing. To get out of the consuming trap of being reactive to colonialism and dominance, Indigenous methodologies must take center stage in Indigenous search processes. Indigenous searchers must position our worldview at the center and work out from there. However, I doubt that we can have a pure Indigenous methodological process today. Methodological appropriateness is the operative stance here. When we make Indigenous worldviews and processes central to our search, we can decide which methods to employ or what blending of methods work best in Indigenous contexts. The choice then becomes to move from a path of oppression and dominance to a path of self-determination and liberation. Our liberation and emancipation won't come with the colonizing tools of knowledge production. We must fight to have our knowledge and methodologies become central to our searches and to have them lifted up as valid methodological choices.

I return to Shawn Wilson's (2003) continuum of four stages toward the development of an Indigenous paradigm, where in stage four Indigenous research is based in Indigenous philosophies and worldviews. This was true of the work of all the searchers where the Indigenous methodologies employed by Indigenous researchers were grounded in Indigenous worldviews. The relationship between Indigenous worldview and methodologies was a central theme in all the theses and conversations and learning circle. Aboriginal epistemology and Indigenous thought are foundational elements to employing an Indigenous methodology and Indigenous ethics are inherent in Indigenous knowledge and teachings. Employing an Indigenous paradigm and methodology is possible as evidenced by the participants in this dissertation.

In summary, Indigenous methodologies *are* holistic and relational and *are* built from an accumulation and genealogy of knowledge. The experiences of conscious Indigenous researchers who employ holistic Indigenous methodologies are summarized reiterating the elements of the petal flower and include:

### **Worldview**

- Priorizing Indigenous knowledge, worldviews and principles in the re-search.
- Positioning Indigenous ways at the center and refusing to see them in relation to western / dominant ways of knowing.

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### **Self**

- Central presence of self in the research
- Location: A commitment to doing research as an Indigenous person and from that position.
- A commitment to research relationships, Indigenous peoples and communities.
- A recognition of the importance for Indigenous people in recovering humanity and rehumanizing knowledge production.

- Remember your motives

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### **The Journey**

- Embark on processes and travel on search journeys that are emergent, transformative and healing.

- Attune to process

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### **Critical Consciousness and Supports**

- A confrontation of colonial history with sociopolitical honesty.
- An integration of Indigenous knowledge and decolonizing ideologies, thoughts, feelings, frameworks and models of practice.

- Capitalizing on our strengths and supports throughout

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### **Diversity in Methods**

- An acceptance of diverse, eclectic and varied Indigenous approaches as essential and useful for Indigenous scholars' research.
- A holistic and cyclical approach that attends to spirit, heart, mind and body.
- Methods are culturally relative and are rooted in worldview
- Methodologies rooted in oral traditions will involve ceremony, song, stories, teachings and knowledge that are creative, diverse, visual, oral, experiential and sensory based.
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### **Acknowledging Enviro-Academic Contexts**

- Making strategic decisions related to coping with obstacles and gatekeepers, the committee, and writing oral traditions.
- Negotiate and deal with the clash of academic and Indigenous theories, methods and expectations to create change.

There are multiple layers of relationships and interconnections between and amongst varied and diverse methodologies. Indigenous searchers who strive to be holistic in their methodological approaches may employ a cultural, historical, and critical lens to begin asking themselves: is my search for knowledge congruent with Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, epistemologies and values?

Indigenous research is mitigated on the survival of the distinct position of Indigenous knowledge and peoples on this land. The motives and agendas of conscious Indigenous searchers are anti-colonial, emancipatory and liberating. Although Indigenous research has tended to begin by blending euro-western and Indigenous theories and methodologies, it is primarily directed toward benefiting and positively effecting Aboriginal circumstances and lives in Canada. Although Indigenous research by non-Indigenous allies was not the focus of my thesis, there is some evidence that Indigenous research agendas can be effectively

operationalized when led with principles of ownership and control by Indigenous communities. Indigenous research agendas can be fulfilled collectively and inclusively.

Indigenous methodologies are holistic and rooted in Indigenous worldviews, paradigms, principles, experiences, and histories. They reflect the ideals and means by which conscious Indigenous searchers manifest their research agendas. These methodologies, when employed, move theory into practice, rhetoric into action, and visions into reality. They are examples of walking the talk. When actualized Indigenous methodologies concretely reinforce living manifestations of Indigenous knowledge into contemporary contexts. Applications of Indigenous teachings, methods, and processes in our research are anti-rhetorical, anti-colonial, and pro-Indigenous in practice.

Indigenous research is best, though not exclusively, operationalized through Indigenous methodologies. Indigenous research agendas may be advanced with the support of allied theories and methodologies. However, when Indigenous methodologies are used explicitly and actively, the research becomes more fully holistic, spiritual, relational, relevant, authentic and meaningful, and more effectively serves resistance and recovery. Indigenous methodologies establish congruency while substantiating the value of Indigenous knowledge in the research process. Their very application brings traditional knowledge into contemporary contexts thereby fuelling transformation, transcendence and translation of the old into the new. Indigenous research methods embody resistance, survival and renewal. The methodologies evidenced throughout this dissertation are testimony to the vitality, reality, validity and reliability of the application of Indigenous theory and knowledge in Indigenous research.

My research is intended to contribute to the discourse on Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge within the academy. Slowly, Indigenous researchers are uncovering and

realizing the appropriate use of Indigenous methodologies and knowledge in research. As research projects and their methodologies are disseminated, shared and talked about doorways open up permitting and legitimizing the presence and application of Indigenous ways of doing research. The academy is being pressured to create space for Indigenous forms of knowledge production and change is occurring. I encourage Indigenous scholars to continue to have conversations and gatherings toward the ongoing articulation of Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge. I am thankful for the “Shawane Dagosiwin” conferences on Indigenous research. Without a doubt we continue to establish channels to have an impact on making Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing a solid methodological choice within the academy. Integral to the conversations occurring is the explicit need to create “methodological space’ in the academy for Indigenous searchers and scholars to actualize Indigenous knowledge. Academies need to support such gatherings and assist in creating space for collective minds to congregate, explore and learn from one another.

Some questions that would be interesting to do future searches on are: How have Indigenous research theses impacted the academy? What non-thesis research is being done within the academy? What changes are institutions specifically making and what lessons are being retained? Outside of the graduate thesis are Indigenous researchers freer to employ Indigenous methodologies in the academy? How are Indigenous searchers making meaning of their searches and what representations are they using? How are Indigenous scholars representing their material in their dissertations: the format, language, translation, text, imagery, stories etc...? How are we adapting from oral to written and from visual to text? What issues of knowledge and language translation arise and how do we reconcile the issues? What would an Indigenous methodology look like in quantitative searches? How do we apply Indigenous

methodologies in the hard sciences? Such searches would contribute to the ongoing development and articulation of Indigenous research, as this dissertation did by providing a collective overview. There is ample space to continue the development and articulation of Indigenist research. Space to be, to think, and to do is needed. Space is required to search for congruency and space is needed to explore methodological options.

I believe that Indigenous researchers in the academy are having an impact and are creating, making and claiming legitimate space to conduct their searches using congruent methodologies to their worldview. Their very presence makes visible the necessary cultural mirrors for upcoming Indigenous scholars in their research. The precedent has been set. This examination of Indigenous search methodologies and experiences by Indigenous scholars provides a sample of realistic possibilities. They are completed theses whereby the Indigenous scholars successfully fulfilled their academic requirements. In fact, in the last six months, four of the people I had conversations with have successfully completed their doctoral thesis. We can meet both academic and community standards and do work which is relevant to our Nations and peoples while making an academic contribution.

Working in isolation contradicts Indigenous methodologies and perpetuates the duality Indigenous searchers experience. It counters our way of being and disconnects us from each other. A central tendency in all the searchers' methods was location and situating ourselves in our work. Why? Because we need to reconnect to our collective histories, memories, experiences, communities and relations. We are countering a history that severed us from our language, culture, parents, siblings, family, land, relatives, and communities. Although Indigenous searchers evidence a variety of means of maintaining connections and relationships, joint dissertations would help reinforce, reconnect and re-member us as opposed to

dismembering and alienating us. Many searchers identified their isolation and loneliness during their searches. Joint graduate searches would re-member us to each other and through that process aid in rebuilding communities where knowledge production is once again a collective process. Working on a dissertation with other Indigenous scholars seems more natural and closer to Indigenous methodologies. Had I had this hindsight five years ago I would have been proposing a joint dissertation and trying to push that doorway open with the university. If we remain isolated in the academy, our searches are still alienated, thus separating us from each other and from what our searches are about - community relationships and survival. Perhaps our next leap will be to create Indigenous spaces for Indigenous forms of knowledge production. One step would be for the academy to create space for Indigenous searches to do joint dissertations.

One of the things I've learned that has been empowering for me is that in all of the research projects there are personal connections and personal reasons why someone is doing the particular research that they're doing. We are inherently connected to our research. And I think this is true of every Aboriginal person's research that I've read or looked at. Nobody's doing "scientifically" detached research because we are emotionally connected. And I believe that to be an important element. Moreover, Indigenous researchers have a motive that's connected to their community, personal, history and experiences. We all somehow want to make life better and we want to improve the 'Indian situation in Canada'. The topics in the theses that I've read are wide ranging but the motives are closely related. The meaning that we receive from our searches is related to our identity, community, improving conditions and ensuring survival.

Finding the words to conclude my search is like searching for the sky to end. What I mean is that for a process that must continue, no real conclusion exists. I cannot conclude a

journey that I myself am still on. I continue to have conversations and search for methodologies of searching. There are many varieties of petal flowers out there. There is still much space for ongoing work in this area. I wish to encourage others to join the circle of Indigenous scholars in actualizing and articulating Indigenous ways of knowing into Indigenous ways of searching for knowledge. This is how we come to know: we prepare, we journey, we search, we converse, we process, we gather, we harvest, we make meaning, we create, we transform and we share what we know. Our spirit walks with us on these journeys. Our ancestors accompany us. Our communities support us and our families hold us up. Last, but definitely not least, we come to know because we have to survive in a world that erodes and encroaches upon us. Our history has shown us that. We come to know because of a deep and profound love for our land, ancestors and spirit. My search has taken me across the landscapes of unpublished dissertations where there is a wealth of knowledge. Conversations with other people helped to keep me grounded and attuned to our passions and our truths. A circle gathering helped us all believe and know that what we know is worth fighting for. How we come to know is both simple and complex; it is both fluid and concrete; it is both subjective and objective; and it is both rigorous and adaptable. How we come to know contains histories of traditions of a peoples' knowledge, whose life depended on searching, gathering and sharing. Today is no different, maybe the contexts have changed and yet we still have the knowledge and methodologies on how we come to know. Within the academy, graduate Indigenous researchers have successfully utilized Indigenous methodologies and achieved academic acceptance. Change is no longer near. Change is here! Kaandosswin, this is how we come to know!

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## **Appendix A:**

### **Personal Reflections**

The purpose of sharing some of my personal reflections along my search is to reveal some aspects of the process of making meaning that I journeyed on. These pieces are extracted from my search journal where I recorded my experiences and reflections. In sharing these reflections, I model aspects of my methodological process during the course of my search and particularly as I was making meaning of all that I gathered. These reflections are single spaced to discern them as my voice and the journal entry date is identified with each reflection.

#### **June 29, 2005: Conversations**

Today I was interviewed by Indigenous searcher and the interview itself instigated some central issues and questions that I, as an Indigenous research see and have identified in my own research process such as the use of the term research; the struggle to do a study of Indigenous methodologies within a colonial setting; the challenge to morph from a colonized mindset into and Indigenous way of thinking, being and doing; and the notion that we are morphing into something different in order to be ourselves is absurd.

In this interview, I talked about the essence of Indigenous methodology and feeling the conviction that it already exists in how we search today, and how our ancestors have searched for knowledge: we have used our dreams, our fasts and vision quests, sweat lodge ceremonies, circles etc...

I wondered if I shouldn't instead be using Indigenous methodologies in search for an affirmation or confirmation of what, I feel in my spirit, to be what we are looking for today. What if I went fasting in search for knowledge and wrote about that? What if I recorded my dreams and laid down my sema in search for answers? Would they be accepted in the academy? I felt compelled to rethink my own approaches again.

#### **January 26, 2006: Dreams**

Last night the northern lights were dancing in the sky – the ancestors are near and dancing, my partner said to me. Last night I dreamt that I was doing work for the old ones. In this setting there was a traditional camp set up and all the people there were Anishinabek. There were some tents and lodges being set up and it seemed like people were preparing for something. I was busy making an object for a medicine man. I can not say what I was making, nor what it's purpose was for – all I can say is that it was to be used by the medicine man to help in his sacred healing work. I was making it out of animal rawhide, some of the fur was still attached and the rawhide was supple and easy to fashion and sew. The object had a handle crafted out of bone or fine wood, it had curves around the handle. I was shocked because there were frozen babies in a

cold icy river. They were covered with ice and there was a very small skull which I gently took out of the icy water. I felt that it needed to be attached to the object that I was fashioning for the medicine man. I attached it by sewing it to the rawhide. I noticed that my stitches were very fine and well done. I was an exquisite craftswoman and whatever I was making was a powerful healing tool that would be used by the medicine man. I went to the medicine man and showed him how the object was coming. There were no words exchanged. I just showed it to him and he looked it over and motioned toward a part of the object that still had some animal hair on it. The Elder told me to scrap some of the hair off that part of the rawhide. I acknowledged him and took the object back to continue working on it.

Later in this dream, I was getting a lodge ready and told an Anishinabe man that the tent would need a long pole – I guess I was preparing to stay there for awhile. I sensed that we were preparing to ceremonies of some sort.

I related this dream to my own work - my dissertation and how I am working on it and fashioning something that will be purposeful and useful to the good of Indigenous peoples. The Elders and the ancestors were in my dream and guiding me and telling me what to do. He said keep on working on it – it wasn't finished. Like I feel today – I'm not sure what I am crafting exactly, but I feel it to be purposeful. I continue fashioning the information that I have and continue nurturing my ideas toward something that I hope is worthwhile and useful and is sanctioned by the people. I feel a validation from this dream in that the Elder / medicine man tells me to continue working on what I am crafting and that the object itself will become a powerful tool for good things.

### **March 6, 2006: Representations**

I had been transcribing and working with my raw data for the month of February. I have also been preoccupied with completing the document reviews of the Indigenous research projects within the thesis and dissertations. I feel really good about having accomplished those two things to date. My process thus far has been comprised of sorting out the information and getting it ready to look deeper into. In the back of my heart and mind I had been churning around the question: what was I going to do to ensure the representation of all this amazing information would be holistic and not just limited to text. I continued to feel that including photographic images would be what I would want to do and that may include the photos of those whom I conversed with – but there had to be more. What could I do to create and represent what I want to share in a visual manner? This question lingered in my conscious awareness over the months of January and February while doing the document review and discussion transcriptions. I had also prayed on that question and had put it out to the universe to help me find the path in which I could represent what I am learning.

Last night with this question lingering in my consciousness I had a dream that revealed to me a process of what I needed to do. The dream was quite directive and there is no question within my mind that the dream was a guide. This alone was an affirmation that the ancestors wanted me to continue. I was shown various methods of representing what I was learning. I was told to use the land and the elements of the land: for example I was shown a snowy landscape and on that snowy landscape was an image and words. They were inaudible to me. I was then shown sand with stones fashioned into words and images. Then I saw twigs on the ground fashioned into something. I was told to take what I was learning and integrate it back to the

landscape and to use the landscape as a messenger. I would fashion the lessons and teachings into the landscape and then photograph these images and integrate them into my project. So my thesis will be a combination of text, imagery, land and earth elements. Miigwech for that. I must put down my sema to express my gratitude. Phew! I got the message and realized that what I needed to do to keep my process going. Feelings of gratitude emerged knowing that the spirits would continue to walk with me and would help me so that I could be purposeful in my work. I believe that when the spirits respond to our search for direction, that whatever it is that we receive must be the direction that we must follow. In this seeking, we also surrender to our process.

### **April 8, 2006: Basket making**

My mother and father are visiting from Ontario for a couple of weeks. Today is Saturday and I thought that it would be a good opportunity to ask my mother to teach us how to make red willow baskets. I had noticed that the red willows were ready for picking and that my mom had just happened to come and visit at this time. I wanted my daughter and step-daughter to be involved in this project so they could learn about a traditional practice of searching for red willow, harvesting, and then making the baskets with Cocomish.



We had finished our breakfast and everyone was fed and ready for the day. I gathered the children together and had talked with my mom about making the baskets. The girls accompanied us on our walk as we searched for the red willows. They seemed happy to have an activity to engage on. I was very happy to have my mom to, once again, show me how to make these baskets. We walked along a path near my home which was along a lake. It was a beautiful spring day. The geese were migrating back north and there were hundreds of them, filling the sky with their v formations and honking sounds. The pelicans were also migrating and their song is different, naturally, than the geese. Pelicans fly in v formations too, but they fly in more of a wave pattern and their flight seems slower – almost like a slow waving waltz in the sky. It's truly beautiful. The pelicans and the geese are my favorite birds to watch as I admire their shared leadership and collaborative journey work. Okay back to our walk. My mom and I wandered slowly along the trail examining the red willow, looking for just the right branches – they had to be straight, flexible, not too fat and not too thin (ummm...this sounds familiar in other areas!). She pointed out the ones that we would harvest. We took out our sema and offered it to Mother Earth while giving our prayers of thanks. My mother first offered sema and I followed. She then directed me as to which red willow branches to take. At times, I had to wiggle my way through the bushes to just the right red willow branch and then untangle myself from the grasp of other branches. I asked how come she couldn't pick the ones closer to the trail. She just laughed. The girls helped find the red willow bushes and pointed them out as we walked along the trail. When we had gathered enough for three baskets, we returned home with our red willow in hand.

Before we did anything else, we had to have a snack and a little rest. The walk and picking red willow was tiring for my mother and she needed a cup of tea and a bit of time to rest. It wasn't long before she was sitting outside cleaning the red willow. When I saw her sitting on the porch, I collected the girls to come and learn how to make the baskets. At first they were interested and kept asking how long it would take. I said that I didn't know. So Cocomish began to talk with the girls about the red willow and making baskets. They listened and started preparing the bottom of the baskets. But it wasn't long before they got distracted as kids often do. I continued working with my mother because I had made these baskets with her before and knew that I could use another lesson to refresh my memory. I had also wanted to spend this time with her. So my mother and I spend the afternoon working on our baskets. I chased the girls and tried to engage them in our project. My daanis, Aki said to me "what do I need to know this for? I'll never use this knowledge." She didn't yet understand and I've heard that before from other youth in other communities. Some youth don't see the value of traditional knowledge and its application to contemporary life. And I couldn't find the words to explain to her or to help her understand. All I could say was that you are very lucky to have your Cocomish here to share her knowledge with you – not everyone gets to have these opportunities. I kept on making the baskets with my mother and deciding to let the girls run off and play. I know that as I learn she too will have another opportunity, through me, to learn what her Cocomish is sharing. Today I will make the time to learn. I will share this knowledge when my daanis is ready.

My experience that day made me think about how we learn traditionally and how we search for the tools that we need. We went searching for the red willow to make a basket and how baskets were important tools for gathering and storing food. Our challenge today became a reflection of a greater challenge that we have in trying to transcend our cultural knowledge from one context into another. So weaving baskets out of red willow was a search for knowledge and a search for tools. I also felt angry, again, at the impact of what being colonized has done to our youth. It saddens me when I see youth not appreciating our traditional ways because they lack the cultural mirrors and cultural validation in society and at school to see the value in practices such as basket weaving. The irony, paradox and struggle in creating space for Indigenous knowledge and methodologies goes beyond the academy.

**Appendix B:**  
**Information Letter**

**(PRINTED ON DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD)**

September, 2005

Boozhoo. My name is Kathy Absolon. Minogizhigokwe nindizhnaakaaz gaaye Waabizhashii n'dodem. Anishinabekwe n'dow. Flying Post ndoonjiibaa. I am a doctoral student in the Department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counselling Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. In partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree of philosophy, I am conducting a qualitative research study on Aboriginal methodologies in research. My study is called **This is how we come to know: Aboriginal methodologies in search for knowledge**. The purpose of this study is to describe how Aboriginal researchers bring their worldviews into their research methodologies within the academy and to map out Aboriginal methodologies in research currently being employed by Aboriginal researchers. Like other Indigenous researchers, I believe we are at a time where we must assert our own ways of knowing, being and doing in our own pursuit of knowledge. I would like to invite you to participate in this study which will partially fulfill my doctoral program requirements.

I plan to conduct individual discussions (interviews) and a learning circle with selected Aboriginal researchers who are striving to bring their worldviews and philosophies into their methodologies within the academy. As an Aboriginal researcher I also strive to conduct my own research practices in accordance with our philosophies and traditions and will do my best to honor Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal knowledge.

I am inviting you to participate in a discussion with me (semi-structured open-ended interview) because you are an Aboriginal researcher whose research methodologies intrigue me and I would like to learn more about your approach and methodological practice. I have a series of general questions related to Aboriginal methodologies in research and would very much like to learn from your thoughts and experiences about this topic. As an Aboriginal researcher myself, I strive to bring my worldview and principles to my research practice. Through sharing research stories and experiences with other Aboriginal researchers I have come to see the need for mapping and identifying the intricacies of Aboriginal methodologies in research, particularly within the academy. Through my study, I hope to validate and bring understanding to the principles that guide Aboriginal researchers in their development of Aboriginal research methodologies in the academy.

Our discussion will require about three hours of your time at a time and location that is convenient to both of us. I do not anticipate any additional time, unless you feel the need to elaborate and want to meet for a second discussion. I will be audio recording our discussion in order to capture all the information that you are willing to share. I may make notes as we proceed, but this will be minimal as my main interest is in listening to what you have to share. You will be free to raise questions or concerns or to withdraw at any time. Please be assured that you are under no obligation to participate, and choosing not to participate, or to withdraw later will have no negative consequences for you.

I can assure you that there will be no physical, psychological or social risk, discomfort or inconvenience to you. I am not venturing into topic areas of a personal or emotional nature. My inquiry is related to your worldviews and methodologies of your research.

Every effort will be made to ensure your anonymity and the confidentiality of the data unless you request otherwise. Neither your name nor any other personal identifying information will be used in the thesis, unless you provide permission to include your photograph in it. However, the relatively small number of Aboriginal researchers in Canada means that I cannot guarantee that your identity will remain unknown to all who read my thesis.

All data gathered will remain confidential. It will be stored in a secure place and only myself and my Supervisor will have access to it. When my thesis is completed I will return the audiotape and transcript of our interview to you with an invitation to consider donating these to The First Nations University of Canada Library for possible use in further research on these topics.

The results of my study will be used for my doctoral thesis. My study may later be published as an article in a scholarly journal, a book, or at a conference.

Please feel free to contact me should you have any further questions regarding the study. I look forward to your participation in my study and would be honored to hear your thoughts, ideas and experiences related to Aboriginal methodologies in research and how you bring your worldviews to your methods within the academy. Miigwech for taking the time to consider participating in my study. Should you be interested in participating in my study please contact me at the telephone numbers or email address listed above. If you accept my invitation to participate, I will be in contact with you to arrange either a telephone or face to face discussion at a mutually agreeable meeting time and place.

Please feel free to contact my thesis Supervisor, Dr. Angela Miles, if you have any questions I cannot answer either now or at any time during the research process. Her contact information is below.

Miigwech & Respectfully yours,

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**Appendix C:**  
**Informed Consent Form**

**(PRINTED ON DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD)**

Informed consent to participate and  
to be audiotaped and/or videotaped / and/or photographed

Miigwech for indicating your willingness to participate in my research project titled: **THIS IS HOW WE COME TO KNOW: ABORIGINAL METHODOLOGIES IN SEARCH FOR KNOWLEDGE.** The purpose of this study is to describe how Aboriginal researchers bring their worldviews into their research methodologies within the academy and to map Aboriginal methodologies currently being employed by Aboriginal researchers. I hope my study contributes to the ongoing creation and recognition of Aboriginal worldviews and methodologies in the seeking and production of knowledge (aka: research). Because Aboriginal culture is also an oral and visual culture, I will include the use of audio, video and photography in my data collection. My research is part of the requirements for completing my Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counselling Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto. The following outlines my research and information about your participation. If you require any further information or explanation, please contact me at 306 729-4598.

In order that I, Kathy Absolon, conduct my research in a respectful manner, the following points will guide my inquiry:

1. The researcher will follow the necessary protocols to honor our Aboriginal culture, traditions, and knowledge.
2. The researcher will interview you for about two to three hours to discuss how you bring your worldviews into your research and to identify what methodologies you use that you consider to be Aboriginal.
3. The researcher will attempt to make the discussions and learning circle environment as comfortable as possible.
4. Where possible, the researcher will make every effort to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. The data collected will be safeguarded and kept in a secure place and transcripts from audio or videotapes will be coded and pseudonyms will be used. However, no attempt will be made in the thesis to disguise the nature of your own research. So you should be aware that you may be identified in this way by readers who are familiar with your work.
5. The researcher does not foresee any personal risks, nor do I anticipate any personal discomfort or distress as a result of this study. The study is financed entirely by the researcher and is of no cost to the participant.

6. The researcher will be using a variety of methods to record the research process such as taking photographs, audiotaping or video recording. In this manner, the researcher is attempting to incorporate methodologies that can reflect the depth, richness and breadth of Aboriginal methodologies.
7. The researcher has indicated that participation is entirely voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time without consequence. If the participant withdraws, the data collected will be returned to them and not used in the study.
8. The benefits of being a participant in both the individual discussion and the learning circle will be to have the opportunity to discuss your worldviews and research methodologies and to understand those experiences in a larger context.
9. The participants are free to ask any questions about the research now or during the course of the interview or learning circle.
10. The individual discussions will be audio recorded using the questions identified. Discussions will be transcribed and then analyzed for emergent themes that best describe Aboriginal research methodologies. The learning circle will be video taped with accompanying flip chart notes from the learning circles. The video tapes will be transcribed.
11. The participants agree to the use of audio, video and photography as a means of capturing examples of a culture that is oral and visual. In the event that the participant consents to including their photograph in the thesis, anonymity of participation is waived. At the end of the study any unused photographs will be given to those who appear in them or destroyed.
12. The results of the research will be used for a doctoral thesis. Later, the study may be published as an article, book or presented at a conference(s).

I have read and understood the letter of consent and the guidelines above and consent to participate in Kathy Absolons' study. I also agree to be audio taped and / or video recorded and photographed.

I have been given a copy of this consent form for my records.

---

Participant's Name & Signature

---

Researcher's Signature

---

Date

Once again, Miigwech for participating in my search for Aboriginal methodologies in search for knowledge (aka: research).

If you have further questions or comments you can contact me at:

Kathy Absolon,

S2V 1A1

Email: !

or my Research Advisor:

Dr. Angela Miles at the Department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counselling Psychology, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto.  
Phone: (416) 923-6641 ext. 2344 or email: [amiles@oise.utoronto.ca](mailto:amiles@oise.utoronto.ca)

**Appendix D:**  
**Participant Consent to Release Photographs**

**(PRINTED ON DEPARTMENT LETTERHEAD)**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have participated in the study **THIS IS HOW WE COME TO KNOW: ABORIGINAL METHODOLOGIES IN SEARCH FOR KNOWLEDGE** conducted by Kathy Absolon.

I have reviewed the photographs that were taken during my interview and / or in the learning circle and wish to give Kathy Absolon permission to include these photographs in her final thesis document.

I am aware that publication of these photographs may compromise my anonymity and the confidentiality of my contribution in this research. This is acceptable to me.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **Appendix E:**

### **The Interview Schedule for Individual Interviews**

The following questions are guiding my inquiry. I will ask each question only if the respondent has not spontaneously provided the information in answer to an earlier question. My goal is to listen respectfully and I will ask supplementary questions to further pursue interesting information and ideas which emerge as aspects of their methodology:

1. Can you tell me about the research that you've done or are doing?
2. What prompted you to do this research? Ask further questions to determine if they did research to benefit their community or what use they thought their research would be.
3. Can you tell me what you think makes your research Aboriginal in terms of your methodology? Supplementary questions: If they did a combination of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal research then I will ask how their research was different from the non-Aboriginal research. I may ask them to elaborate if they indicated certain principles or worldviews that guided their methodology. If there are certain principles that I identified as significant and the person doesn't readily identify it, I may make further inquiries about specific Aboriginal principles.
4. Can you tell me what research you've done that you consider to be Aboriginal research? (This question will depend on the response to the previous one).
5. Can you describe to me how you understand Aboriginal research methodology?
6. Was there any way you did your research that was specific to you as an Aboriginal person?
7. Can you tell me about your experience of doing Aboriginal research in the academy? Supplementary questions: what were the challenges, barriers?
8. What resources did you use? What supported your research methodology?
9. How would you like to have done your research differently if you could have?
10. How would you describe your relationship to your research as an Aboriginal researcher?
11. A concluding question: In summing up our interview I wonder what you would consider to be the essential elements in Aboriginal research?

**Appendix F:**  
**The Interview Schedule for the Learning Circle**

The following questions will guide the learning circle. Each question will be addressed separately in the circle process. I will ask supplementary questions to further pursue interesting information and ideas which emerge from aspects of their methodology:

1. Can each of you tell me what research you've done that you consider to be Aboriginal research?
2. Can you describe to me how you understand Aboriginal research methodology?
3. Can you tell me about your experience of doing Aboriginal research in the academy?  
Supplementary questions: what were the challenges, barriers?
4. If you could have done your research differently, how would you have done it?
5. A concluding question: I wonder what you would consider to be the essential elements in Aboriginal research?

I will also invite the learning circle participants to make suggestions and provide direction in the articulation and representation of Aboriginal methodologies in research.

**Appendix G:**  
**The Learning Circle Handout**

**This is how we come to know: Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge**

Boozhoo. My name is Kathy Absolon. Minogiizhigokwe nindizhnaakaaz gaayeWaabizhashii n'dodem. Anishinabekwe n'dow. Flying Post ndoonjiibaa.

I am a doctoral student in the Department of Adult Education, Community Development and Counselling Psychology at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto. In partial fulfillment of my doctoral degree of philosophy, I am conducting a qualitative research study on Indigenous methodologies in research. My study is called **This is how we come to know: Indigenous methodologies in search for knowledge**. The purpose of my study is to describe how Indigenous researchers bring their worldviews into their research methodologies within the academy and to map out Aboriginal methodologies in research currently being employed by Aboriginal researchers. Like other Indigenous researchers, I believe we are at a time where we must assert our own ways of knowing, being and doing in our own pursuit of knowledge.

I plan to conduct a learning circle with selected Indigenous researchers who are striving to bring their worldviews and philosophies into their methodologies within the academy. As an Aboriginal researcher I also strive to conduct my own research practices in accordance with our philosophies and traditions and will do my best to honor Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal knowledge.

**An Invitation to Attend** I am inviting you to participate in a discussion with me because you are an Aboriginal researcher whose research methodologies intrigue me and I would like to learn more about your approach and methodological practice. As an Aboriginal researcher myself, I strive to bring my worldview and principles to my research practice. Through sharing research stories and experiences with other Aboriginal researchers I have come to see the need for mapping and identifying the intricacies of Aboriginal methodologies in research, particularly within the academy. Through my study, I hope to validate and bring understanding to the principles that guide Aboriginal researchers in their development of Aboriginal research methodologies in the academy.

**I would love to have you come and participate in this session. Information for this session is as follows:**

**Aboriginal Education Research Forum – Shawane Dagoiwin, May 31, - June 2, 2006.** The Forum will be held at the Victoria Inn Hotel and Conference Centre, 1808 Wellington Avenue, Winnipeg, MB.

I will doing the learning circle on **Thursday, June 1, 2006 – 3:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.** in **Embassy D** of the Victoria Inn Hotel & Conference Centre.

**At this session I will be handing out consent forms.**

**Appendix H:**  
**Analytic Framework for Dissertations**

**Methodological Content Analysis**

Author:

Title:

Research topic:

Reflections on the research:

Methodology as described: use classic / unique words

Analysis of methodology: key/glazing themes, emerging themes, creating codes

Examples / quotes / illustrations to justify analysis

Identified problems in the study

Overarching methodological themes

Questions that arise from the methodology:

Reflections on analyzing: how do I feel about it?

Shaping a story that must be told ...