

Thoughts on an Indigenous Research Methodology

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I am still struggling to eliminate the schooled tension that I acquired in believing that every question has one right answer, so I am always waiting for the thinking to stop, for that one glorious, culminating second when I know the whole answer to one question. I have been relearning that moment will not come, at least not while I am in a thinking mode. I am also realizing that I must have learned to trust other thinkers or, at least, relearned to trust my own thinking. (Weber-Pillwax, 1999, pp. 44-45)

I begin with this passage because it best describes one of the major dilemmas I struggled with as I attempted to write an article on Indigenous research methodologies. I spent several weeks going through books, articles, and journals trying to find one good definition of Indigenous research methodology, and in the end I realized that I would not find a specific answer.

I am reminded of the words Walter Lightning (1992) used when he was working with the late Elder Art Raining Bird. He said to him in Cree,

Grandfather, I don't know how to do these things. I am trying to prepare the protocol but I realize that basically I don't know anything. As a matter of fact, I have no idea what I'm doing. Please, I implore you, have compassion for what I am doing. (p. 216)

Suddenly the task of writing this article seems a little overwhelming, and I wonder if perhaps I am doing something that I shouldn't be doing yet. As Lightning (1992) said, "I have no idea what I'm doing," but now that I am at this point I feel I must forge ahead. I have been taught that when I commit to do something, or even if I am asked to do something, then I must do it the best way I know how. I was reminded of this again just a few months back, at the 2002 Indigenous Scholars Conference, when Stan Wilson said, "When you are asked to do something, even something you might be uncomfortable with, you need to do it, and do it the best way you know how."

I am aware of the position I place myself in as I write this article. A topic such as the articulation of Indigenous research methodologies is new, and like myself, many Indigenous students are searching for answers. I don't know if I can provide these answers, but what I do attempt to do is compile the works of Indigenous scholars who have written and spoken to me directly about the topic. But before I go any further I must introduce myself, in keeping with Indigenous discourse.

I am a member of the Saddle Lake First Nation. Although I have lived on the reserve all my life, I lived an isolated life, sometimes almost feeling as if I was not part of the community. My formal education was obtained through the provincial school system, and although I did attend a First Nations College, much of the material I studied still had a mainstream focus. It was not until I started the Master's Program in First Nations Education at the University of Alberta that I was exposed to the concept of Indigenous knowledge. Then I really started thinking

about my formal education and realized that somehow this education had divorced me from my roots and that what I had was a partial education. I had been conditioned to believe that although Indigenous ways of knowing were important to us as Aboriginal people, we could never use that knowledge on a formal basis because of the dominant Western science paradigm, so I never took a keen interest in this topic until now. It is exciting to know that finally our voices are being heard and that Indigenous scholars are now talking about and using Indigenous knowledge in their research. I think it is through such dialogue and discussion that Indigenous research methodologies will one day become common practice, for it is time to give voice to and legitimize the knowledge of our people.

Why We Need an Indigenous Research Methodology

Smith (1999) says we need an Indigenous research methodology because for too long our stories have gone untold, or have been misinterpreted. She says, "we are the most researched people in the world," but we still have not seen the benefit of all that research. It really is upsetting that Western researchers have for so long come into our communities and assumed to know us, but in fact they know nothing about us. *This is why we need an Indigenous research methodology.*

In Smith's (1999) words,

Just knowing that someone measured our "faculties" by filling the skulls of our ancestors with millet seeds and compared the amount of millet seed to the capacity for mental thought offends our sense of who and what we are. It galls us that Western researchers and intellectuals can assume to know all that is possible to know of us, on the basis of their brief encounters with some of us. It appals us that the West can desire, extract and claim ownership of our ways of knowing, our imagery, the things we create and produce, and then simultaneously reject the people who created and developed those ideas and seek to deny them further opportunities to be creators of their own culture and own nations. It angers us when practices linked to the last century, and the centuries before that, are still employed to deny the validity of indigenous peoples' claim to existence, to land and territories, to the right of self-determination, to the survival of our language and forms of cultural knowledge, to our natural resources and systems for living within our environments. (p. 1)

Martin (2002) believes that developing an Indigenous research methodology is important because we must reframe, reclaim, and rename the research endeavor.

To reclaim research is to take control of our lives and our lands to benefit us in issues of importance for our self-determination. It is to liberate and emancipate by decolonisation and privileging the voices, experiences and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands so that research frameworks are reflective of this. To reframe research is to focus on matters of importance as we identify these. It is to respect our ways and honour our rites and social mores as essential processes, through which we live, act and learn.... To rename research is to recognise and use our worldviews, and our realities as assertions of our existence and survival. (p. 4)

According to Smith (1999), Indigenous people all over the world have a different story to tell, but they have never taken the opportunity to tell that story. "As a result of colonial, patriarchal, corporate, exploitative, and often ecologically destructive development models, indigenous knowledge has been underestimated and undervalued" (Sefa Dei, Hall, & Rosenberg, 2000, p. 8). Sefa Dei et al. add, "Local input must be from the grassroots ... should be ecologically sound, and

should tap the diverse views, opinions, resources, and interests manifested in the cultural values and norms of local communities" (p. 73).

Weber-Pillwax (1999) believes that developing this Indigenous research methodology increases the possibility that research done in Indigenous communities "will be a source of enrichment to their lives and not a source of depletion or denigration" (p. 38). She also believes that using this type of research methodology would "move scholars toward a stronger sense of professional and ethical accountability" (p. 38).

Although there are many reasons why we should develop and define our own research methodology, Urion (1995) does caution that we have to be careful. He believes that there is danger in defining it. Why?

The first problem is that it will be defined in comparison with western or European models for the acquisition of knowledge rather than on its own terms. It follows then that Indigenous perspectives will be defined in terms of the exotic, and in the larger context this will marginalize Indigenous perspectives in the world of research. Furthermore, it gives people the idea that new techniques are exotic to our culture. The fourth comment... is that a definition of Indigenous knowledge would allow some people to think we are making that definition in essentialist terms. (pp. 56-57)

Developing an Indigenous Research Methodology

As researchers, the first thing we do when we are going to conduct any research is to decide what type of methodology to use. We try to find something that will accommodate what we wish to accomplish. Shawn Wilson (2001) refers to this as finding a *research paradigm*. A research paradigm is "a set of beliefs about the world and about gaining knowledge that goes together to guide your actions as to how you're going to go about doing your research" (p. 175). He says that in this paradigm you must first figure out what your ontology is, or what you believe is real in this world. Then you have to try to figure out how you think about that reality, which is your epistemology. Next you have to look at your research methodology, which is looking at "how you are going to use your ways of thinking (your epistemology) to gain more knowledge about your reality" (p. 175). To Wilson this is all very important. He adds that in this paradigm you must also include your axiology, "which is your set of morals or set of ethics" (p. 175).

Wilson (2001) goes on to speak about some of the various major paradigms that are used when conducting research. He names positivism, post-positivism, critical theory, action research, and constructivism theory. He says that although some of these theories do fit with our Indigenous way of thinking there is something missing from each. He explains:

One major difference between those dominant paradigms and an Indigenous paradigm is that those dominant paradigms build on the fundamental belief that knowledge is an individual entity: the researcher is an individual in search of knowledge, knowledge is something that is gained, and therefore, knowledge may be owned by an individual. An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, or just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a 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. (p. 177)

As Indigenous people we are dependent on everyone and everything around us—all our relations, be it the air, water, rocks, trees, animals, insects, humans, and so forth. We need each other to survive. Graveline (1998) puts it this way: “That which the trees exhale, I inhale. That which I exhale, the tree inhales. We live in a world of many circles; these circles go out into the universe and constitute our identity, our kinship, our relations” (p. 57).

Wilson (2001) feels that because of this relationality, as Indigenous researchers we must realize that we are accountable to all our relations when doing research. So what is an Indigenous research methodology? Wilson explains it this way.

To me an Indigenous methodology then becomes talking about relational accountability. As a researcher you are answering to all your relations when doing research. You are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgements of better or worse. Instead you should be fulfilling your relationships with the world around you. So your methodology has to ask different questions: rather than asking about validity or reliability, you are asking, “Am I fulfilling my role in this relationship? What are my obligations in this relationship?” The axiology or morals need to be an integral part of the methodology so that when I am gaining knowledge, I am not just gaining in some abstract pursuit; I am gaining knowledge in order to fulfil my end of the research relationship. This becomes my methodology, an Indigenous methodology, by looking at relational accountability or being accountable to all my relations. (p. 177)

Martin (2002) explains that the main features of an Indigenous research methodology are as follows:

1. Recognition of our world views, our knowledge and our realities as distinctive and vital to our existence and survival. This serves as a research framework;
2. Honouring Aboriginal social mores as essential processes through which we live, learn and situate ourselves as Aboriginal people in our own lands and when in the lands of other Aboriginal people;
3. Emphasizing the social, historical and political contexts which shape our experiences, our lives, positions and futures;
4. Privileging the voices, experiences, and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands;
5. Identifying and redressing issues of importance for us. (p. 5)

The next question then is *Who should develop an Indigenous research methodology?* When we speak of knowledge as a relational thing, I begin to wonder if just anyone could carry out this type of research. My question is, Will people know what Shawn Wilson (2001) is talking about when he says “knowledge is relational” or as Weber-Pillwax (personal communication) often calls it, relationality? Smith (1999) says that many communities and Indigenous activists ask this question as well. In fact she says they are asking:

Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will its results be disseminated? (p. 5)

As I thought about these questions my immediate response was, if an Indigenous research methodology is about Indigenous reality, then how could this methodology be used by anyone other than an Indigenous person? How could anyone who is not Indigenous have the Indigenous knowledge that is required,

and if non-Indigenous people do participate, then will it not remain just as it was: research conducted on Indigenous people? As Smith (1999) points out, this type of research has been “worthless to us, the indigenous world” (p. 3). So again I ask, who will carry out this type of research?

Shawn Wilson (2001) feels as I do. He explains:

Indigenous people need to do Indigenous research because we have the lifelong learning and relationship that goes into it. You are not just gaining information from people; you are sharing your information. You are analyzing and you are building ideas and relationships as well. Research is not just something that’s out there: it’s something that you’re building for yourself and for your community. (p. 179)

Regardless of who is going to do this research, Weber-Pillwax (1999) suggests that those who participate in the discourse of Indigenous research methodology should include a consideration of such principles as:

1. The interconnectedness of all living things,
2. the impact of motives and intentions on person and community,
3. the foundation of research as lived indigenous experience,
4. the groundedness of theories in indigenous epistemology,
5. the transformative nature of research,
6. the sacredness and the responsibility of maintaining personal and community integrity, and
7. the recognition of languages and cultures as living processes. (pp. 31-32)

As I went through Weber-Pillwax’s (1999) list, I realized that conducting research using an Indigenous research methodology would not be as simple as it originally sounded. It means that the researcher must know the cultural protocols, values, and beliefs of the Indigenous group with which they are studying. And as Weber-Pillwax says, “A researcher must make sure that the three “R’s—Respect, Reciprocity, and Relationality—are guiding the research” (personal communication). Again I question, Will just any researcher know what Weber-Pillwax means by those words? Respect is more than just saying please and thank you, and reciprocity is more than simply giving a gift. According to Cree Elders, showing respect—*kihceyih towin*—is a basic law of life. “Respect regulates how we treat mother earth, the plants, the animals and our brothers and sisters of all races” (Blue Quills First Nations College, 2001, p. 86). This manual quotes a Cree Elder who says, “Respect means you listen intently to others’ ideas, that you do not insist that your idea prevails. By listening intently you show honor, consider the well being of others, and treat others with kindness and courtesy.”

Indigenous Knowledge

Sefa Dei et al. (2000) explain that Indigenous knowledge is unique to given cultures, localities, and societies, and is “acquired by local peoples through daily experience” (p. 19). Martin (2002) adds that our knowledge or “our ways of knowing are consolidated through people exercising their connections to country [i.e., the land]” (p. 7). She explains:

Knowledge is part of the system that is our Ways of Knowing. It is more than just information or facts and it is taught and learned in certain contexts, in certain ways and is purposeful only to the extent to which it is used. For instance, watching or observing is not a passive activity but the strength is in knowing what to observe and when to apply the

knowledge gained from such activity. Our Ways of Knowing are embedded in our worldview and are an equal part of this system, not an artifact of this. They are socially refined and affirmed, giving definition and meaning to our world. Without "knowing" we are unable to "be," hence our Ways of Knowing inform our Ways of Being. (p. 7)

Cordero (1995) agrees that Indigenous ways of knowing are different from those of Western knowledge. He says that in Western knowledge there is a separation of those areas called science from those areas called art and religion. The Native knowledge base, on the other hand, integrated those areas of knowledge so that science was both religious and aesthetic. We find, then, an emphasis in the Western tradition of approaching knowledge through the use of the intellect as well as the senses. For Native people a mode in approaching knowledge requires intuition also. (p. 30)

Castellano (2000) says, "the knowledge valued in aboriginal societies derives from multiple sources including *traditional teachings, empirical observations, and revelations*" (p. 23), all of which are equally important.

Traditional knowledge (Castellano, 2000) is something that has been handed down from earlier generations, often through creation stories, the treaties, and all the events that occurred throughout history. Elders play a major role in passing on traditional knowledge and teachings.

Empirical knowledge is gained through watching and listening. Before the arrival of Europeans, much of a child's empirical knowledge was attained through this type of instruction. Miller (1996) refers to this instruction as "three L's education"—looking, listening, and learning. Castellano (2000) quotes Waldram who describes how knowledge is created through this mode. "This information processing forms a constant loop in which new information is interpreted in the context of existing information, and revisions to the state of knowledge concerning a particular phenomenon are made when necessary" (p. 23).

Revealed Knowledge: Dreams, Visions, Cellular Memory, and Intuition

Revealed knowledge is acquired "through dreams, visions, and intuitions that are understood to be spiritual in origin" (Castellano, 2000, p. 24). Traditionally, much of what we did was influenced by our dreams, our visions, and our intuition.

Stan Wilson (1995) shared a story that is a good example of revealed knowledge. He spoke of an experience that he had while he was in Georgia several years ago.

As I walked I had an overwhelming feeling of being welcomed in a powerful way. Yet at the same time there was a sadness, almost a melancholy feeling. It was a wistful feeling and yet I knew that I was welcomed.... Later that night an image came to me. I don't know if it was a dream while I was sleeping or if it was a vision that came to me as I was waking up. Whatever it was, it woke me with a start. The image was clear and remains clear to this day. (p. 62)

When Stan told his friend Lionel Kinunwa about this sad, yet welcomed feeling, and about his vision, Kinunwa's response was, "You've had a ten thousand-year-old experience. Your ancestors were happy to see one of their own kind" (p. 65). The dream or vision had a teaching attached.

Cardinal (2001) also spoke of this revealed knowledge when he shared his story about Elders that he observed at an Elder's think tank.

They would say, "Let's sleep on it," and the meeting would end. They would have their personal ceremonies, maybe go into the sweat lodge, or they would go into a pipe ceremony. Early the next morning, by 6 o'clock they would already be meeting while government officials were trying to wake up.

The Elders would talk about their dreams. They would say something like, "I saw this bear walking around this mountain and I was standing there and he took me by surprise," and so forth. The other Elders would listen closely, trying to understand what this could mean. Then they compared information from their dream or vision work. These processes of Circle work and Dream work are methods: Indigenous methods that speak clearly to an Indigenous perspective, and Indigenous worldview. (p. 181)

Castellano (2000) quotes Brody (1983), who describes the power of dreaming and how dreams are still used by the Beaver people of northeastern British Columbia. Brody says,

Some old-timers, men who became famous for their powers and skills, had been great dreamers. Hunters and dreamers. They did not hunt as most people now do. They did not seek uncertainly for the trails of animals whose movements we can only guess at. No, they located their prey in dreams, found their trails, and made dream-kills. Then, the next day, or a few days later, whenever it seemed auspicious to do so, they could go out, find the trail, re-encounter the animals, and collect the kill. (p. 24)

Peggy Wilson (2001) also relates a story about how, before the Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, one of her students in Alaska had a dream in which everything was black, and how she felt like she was being strangled by this black mass.

The student was moved and shocked into action by this experience because it was the day before the oil spill, and she wondered if anyone else in the world had had that warning. So she placed an ad in a number of newspapers throughout the world. She received responses from as far away as England and Africa with people describing similar dreams before that monumental disaster. She referred to this experience as the collective unconscious. (p. 18)

Meyer (1998) says that most of the mentors she interviewed spoke of the "valuable and important role dreams played in their formative years and now as adults. She referred to the lessons in dreams as an important vehicle for understanding" (p. 114).

Cellular Memory

In the category of revealed knowledge, one cannot forget to mention cellular memory as a way of knowing. I was introduced to the topic of cellular memory this past year, and since then it has fascinated me. When I first heard about this way of knowing I was skeptical, yet as I listened to various students talk about this theory, it did begin to make sense. The students who shared this knowledge had been exposed to the concept when they took a class with the late Lionel Kinunwa. He firmly believed that memories are stored in our cells. One of his students elaborated on what this meant to her. She said, "You know how sometimes you just know something without being told, or how sometimes you get the feeling that you know someone, or have been somewhere before. This is cellular memory" (P. Steinhauer, 2002, personal communication).

To elaborate further I quote Stan Wilson (1995) speaking on the topic of cellular memory.

Lionel said, "We have memories. Our ancestral memories are in our blood, they're in our muscles, they're in our bones, they're in our hair." He said that many of us do not pay attention to these memories because we are too busy paying attention to what's going on in the modern world. We don't pay attention to our historic memory. This is why when we hear the drum, our spirit is moved. The vibrations of the drum stir old memories—our ancestral memories. These memories come out of the molecular structure of our being. This is also why when you hear someone speaking your language, your molecular structure picks up those vibrations, because each language has its own peculiar patterns, and you feel good that somebody is speaking your language.

Does this cellular memory explain intuition? Where does that nagging sense of knowing, yet with no concrete proof, come from?

Cardinal (2001) says, "One thing we all have in common, however, is our intuition" (p. 182). He too speaks about Lionel Kinunwa.

Lionel Kinunwa spoke of this as molecular or cellular memory. I have met many young Native people who have come to me and said, "I've always felt different, but not in the sense that I was an Indian and I looked different from the rest, but there is something different down inside." I think as human beings we have a deep connection to our Indigenous roots. Young people in the cities or even on the reserves who do not have connections to their culture and traditions look for these connections. (p. 182)

Do these connections to our past, this ability to tap into revealed knowledge through our dreams and visions, speak directly to a world view that is different from that of the more individually grounded newcomers who comprise "whitestream" society?

Reflections of an Indigenous World View

What is a world view? Graveline (1998) quotes Kearney (1984) and Beck and Walters (1997) who define world view as:

a set of images and assumptions about the world.... Since a worldview is knowledge about the world, what we are talking about here is the epistemology or theory of knowledge. Worldview is defined by Ortiz, a Tewa historian, as "a distinctive vision of reality which not only interprets and orders the places and events in the experience of people, but lends form, direction and continuity to life as well. (p. 19)

In the literature of cultural anthropologists, Robert Redfield (quoted in Tedlock & Tedlock, 1982) supplied the following perspective on this matter:

"World view" differs from culture, ethos, mode of thought, and national character. It is the picture the members of a society have of the properties and characters upon their stage of action. While "national character" refers to the way these people look to the outsider looking in on them, "world view" refers to the way the world looks to that people looking out. Of all that is connoted by "culture," "world view" attends especially to the way a man, in a particular society, sees himself in relation to all else. It is the properties of existence as distinguished from and related to the self. It is, in short, a man's idea of the universe. It is that organization of ideas which answers to a man the questions: Where am I? Among what do I move? What are my relations to these things? ... Self is the axis of "world view." (p. 142)

Henderson (2000) agrees, saying,

I reject the concept of "culture" for worldview. To use "culture" is to fragment Aboriginal worldviews into artificial concepts. The worldview is a unified vision rather than an

individual idea. Aboriginal worldviews assume that all forms are interconnected, that the survival of each life form is dependent on the survival of all others. Aboriginal world views also note that the force to the life forms is derived from an unseen but knowable spiritual realm. (p. 261)

The aboriginal worldview asserts that all life is scared and that all life forms are connected. Humans are neither above nor below others in the circle of life. Everything that exists in the circle is one unity, one heart. (p. 259)

Makokis (2001) says that the Cree world view is “clearly distinctive and is ordered in a circular pattern of interrelated parts, the whole being greater than the sum of these parts” (p. 87). She adds, “the subthemes based on the arrangement of the Cree worldview include a steady flow of thoughts on the centrality of the Creator, beliefs/values/laws, Turtle Teachings, ceremonies, elements, oral tradition and governance” (p. 87).

Gardner (2000) describes the world view of the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en, Indigenous peoples in northern British Columbia.

Human beings are part of an interacting continuum, which includes animals and spirits. Animals and fish are viewed as members of societies, which have intelligence and power, and can influence the course of events in terms of their interrelationship with human beings. (p. 10)

Henderson (2000) further adds that the “Aboriginal worldview may be understood from four complementary perspectives”: *language, knowledge, unity*, and as a mode of social order (p. 261). In this world view are all the values and principles that guide our being. Chisan (2001) refers to these as the Natural Laws—love, honesty, caring or sharing, and strength/determination.

Although there are Indigenous groups all over the world, and although we are different in so many ways, the one thing that seems to bind us together is the common understanding of interconnectedness and that all things are dependent on each other. Graveline (1998) elaborates on this concept:

All things and all people, though we have our own individual gifts and special place, are dependent on and share in the growth and work of everything and everyone else. We believe that beings thrive when there is a web of interconnectedness between the individual and the community and between the community and nature.

Our community prospers when the work that each member performs is in alignment with the Earth and is a direct and sacred expression of Spirit. In Aboriginal Traditional forms, the spiritual infused a person’s entire existence within the world. A spiritual connection helps not only to integrate our self as a unified entity, but also to integrate the individual into the world as a whole. (p. 55).

Although as individuals we are taught to be responsible for ourselves, we are reminded that we must never think of ourselves in isolation. Everything we do, every decision we make, affects our family, our community, it affects the air we breathe, the animals, the plants, the water in some way. Graveline (1998) reveals that the idea of kinship is based on the concrete observation that each of us is totally dependent on everything else. “All of nature is in us, all of us is in nature” (p. 56). She elaborates by quoting Forbes (1979) who once said:

We can stop very quickly and think about what this means. If we lose our hands, we can still live. If we lose our arms, we can still live. If we lose our legs, our noses, our hair—all

kinds of other things—we can still live. But if we lose the air, we will die immediately. If we lose the water, the plants, the earth, the animals we will die. We are more dependent upon those things than we are upon what we call the body. As a matter of fact, we don't really have a body separate from those other things. (p. 56)

Wilson (2001), citing the work of Ho (1991) says, "Pedersen reminds us that our relational responsibilities require that we incorporate reciprocity, interdependence, and interrelatedness between individuals into our research methodologies," and goes on to say:

Like all living creatures, we as Indigenous people are sustained by our connection to the land. Many of us include all other living organisms and entities as part of our identity. I know Aboriginal people who refer to themselves as a squirrel, a hawk, a bear, and thunder being. These labels are not simply names they use to identify their individual characteristics or personalities; rather, at different times they have identified themselves as those beings. This self-recognition enables us to understand where and how we belong to this world, and it has the profound effect of ensuring that wherever we may happen to be at any given time, alone or in the company of others, we do not feel alone. This knowledge nourishes us. (p. 92)

So as Indigenous researchers, we must have a clear understanding of the world view that grounds and drives our work. With that world view embedded, we can choose the research methods, tools, or techniques that we will use.

Indigenous Methods

Martin (2002) explains that before we do any type of research in Indigenous communities we must find a way to situate ourselves in this context. This means that before data collection is even considered we must introduce ourselves to the community—not just by telling people our name or where we live, but by giving personal information about ourselves. She says, "In providing these details, I am claiming and declaring my genealogy and my ancestry" (p. 2). She quotes Moreton-Robinson (2000) who says: "The protocol for introducing one's self to other Indigenous peoples is to provide information about one's cultural location, so that connections can be made on political, cultural and social grounds and relations established" (p. 2).

Weber-Pillwax (2001a) too stresses the importance of developing relationship and trust. Developing trust may mean that you do not receive answers to your research questions right away, but Indigenous research is more than getting answers to research questions. The process, although it might seem long and drawn out, does help the researcher to contextualize the information he or she is receiving. She says,

I took a trip with a friend from that community who gave me a history of the land area during three hours of driving. I saw where people had lived, and learned who they were and how they fitted into the lives of people who still lived there. The history of the land became alive with people and their stories. It was critical stuff, not necessarily because I used it in my research, but because it helped me to contextualize and understand the information and the stories that I was given as I got to know more people and made deeper connections in the community. (p. 171)

Many methods are available to Indigenous researchers: interviews, talking circles, sharing through music, dance art and drama, dream work, and revelations

through connections to nature, to name just a few. Weber-Pillwax (2001b) and Wilson (2001) both agree that most Western research methods are appropriate for use by Indigenous researchers, as long as they honor, respect, manifest, and articulate an Indigenous world view. Regardless of which methods we choose, we must consider the motivation that guides our research. Why are we doing the research, and who is going to benefit from it? The research must “somehow benefit those *other* people who are connected to the research process” (Weber-Pillwax, 1999, p. 36). Wilson adds, “Research is not just something that’s out there: it’s something that you’re building for yourself and for your community” (p. 179). But he does caution:

But some questions do need to be asked when evaluating research methods. One is: What is my role as a researcher, and what are my obligations? You then have to ask yourself: Does this method allow me to fulfill my obligations in my role? Further, does this method help to build a respectful relationship with the other participants in the research? Relations with the idea or topic, as well as with the people or mice or trees or whatever you are working with. All have to be considered. (p. 178)

Martin (2002) further clarifies:

In Indigenous research, methods for data collection are demonstrations of Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing. This entails following codes for communication and protocols for interacting that expects different behaviour in different settings with different participants. This will vary in each setting and must be respected as part of the research activity, not just as a means to acquire research outcomes. (p. 10)

In addition to respect, reciprocity, and relationality, Makokis (2001) believes that it is important to be guided by the natural laws: the natural laws of love/kindness, honesty, sharing, and determination/strength. These help the researcher to understand the importance, validity, and sacredness of the information being shared.

- Love/Kindness—*Kiseywatisowin*, which basically tells us that before we can be humble, we have to be kind, and that we must feel with our heart, not just our mind.
- Honesty—*Kweyaskatesowin*. *Kwesask* is the root word and refers to being aligned and straight. *Itatisowin* is the verb and implies characteristics or a trait of being in life.

We are to lead honest lives. For whatever we do, we must do it in complete honesty with ourselves and others. This keeps our heart, mind, and spirit full of integrity.

- Sharing—*Wichihtowin*. This word stems from *wichih*, to help, *towin* makes the root work into a noun and refers to having everybody involved.
- Strength—*Sohkisowin*. This word refers to strength and determination in the body, and *sohkeyihtamowin* is the strength. (Makokis, 2001, pp. 96-97)

One fact seems most certain, and that is that Indigenous researchers must engage in their work with both passion and compassion, for their obligations are horrendous. They know that research is never objective (nor should it be). In fact Hampton (1995) says:

One thing I want to say about research is that there is a motive. I believe the reason is emotional because we feel. We feel because we are hungry, cold, afraid, brave, loving, or

hateful. We do what we do for reasons, emotional reasons. That is the engine that drives us. That is the gift of the Creator of life. Life feels... Feeling is connected to our intellect and we ignore, hide from, disguise, or suppress that feeling at our peril and at the peril of those around us. Emotionless, passionless, abstract, intellectual, academic research is a goddam lie, it does not exist. It is a lie to ourselves and a lie to other people. Humans—feeling, living, breathing, thinking humans—do research. When we try to cut ourselves off at the neck and pretend an objectivity that does not exist in the human world, we become dangerous, to ourselves first, and then to people around us. (p. 52)

This discussion of Indigenous research is by no means complete, but I believe it does provide a general overview of the complexity of the topic. It is exciting to know that Indigenous people all over the world are recognizing that there is a need to validate and confirm Indigenous research as a paradigm of its own. As Stan Wilson (1995) said, “If we don’t teach these things and if we don’t acknowledge the work and the help of our ancestors in our writings and in our research, will we do any better than the white scholars who have forced us to hear only their side of story for so long?” (p. 69).

So let us begin.

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