

for such persons, languages and words are only powerful or useful to the degree that the speaker has command over them. Also unfortunate is that opportunities for people to learn languages and words is and has always been connected to the political agendas of those in power. The power of the word then was magnified when used in conjunction with a foreign language to control and manage Indigenous peoples over the centuries. Today we recognize that Indigenous research holds the capacity to break the silence and bring forth the powerful songs of long-imprisoned Indigenous voices using their own languages.

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.

What is an Indigenous Research Methodology?

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For my research I began looking at Indigenous psychology and what an Indigenous psychology is. Part of my work involves talking with Indigenous people here in Canada and also in Australia. I am interested in some of the similarities in our ways of thinking and ways of being in the world. A big part of this has been looking at people's epistemologies or how they think, and how this affects how things are in their world. Specifically, I'm looking at Indigenous graduate students and how we are able to be successful at university, but at the same time maintain our culture and maintain a strong Indigenous identity; maintain our identities as Cree people or Bundjalung people or from wherever we come. How is it possible for us to live in both worlds, and what is the thinking behind what makes it possible? This thought process is indicative of an Indigenous epistemology, which is really tied to Indigenous methodology. So how those two, epistemology and methodology, interplay with each other has been a focal point of my research.

I have looked at various research paradigms and at the differences between research paradigms and research perspectives. We now need to move beyond an "Indigenous perspective in research" to "researching from an Indigenous paradigm." Before I go any further I should define some words. To me a paradigm is simply a label for a set of beliefs that go together that guide my actions. So a research paradigm is a set of beliefs about the world and about gaining knowledge that go together to guide your actions as to how you're going to go about doing your research. When I was thinking about this, I focused on four aspects that combine in the makeup of different paradigms.

One is ontology or a belief in the nature of reality. Your way of being, what you believe is real in the world: that's your ontology. Second is epistemology, which is how you think about that reality. Next, when we talk about research methodology, we are talking about how you are going to use your ways of thinking (your epistemology) to gain more knowledge about your reality. Finally, a paradigm includes axiology, which is a set of morals or a set of ethics. Cora spoke about this; how research has to do something beneficial in this world: that is part of the axiology of an Indigenous research paradigm. The axiology, the ethics and judgment of which research is worthy of doing is different for different research paradigms. These four—ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology—go together to make a research paradigm. In the dominant, Eurocentric way of doing research there are four, maybe five, major paradigms that are used most of the time.

Positivism and postpositivism are two paradigms that are based on the similar ontological foundation that there is only one reality. There is one real world out there, and our job as researchers, then, is to explore that one reality. A

postpositivist would say that as human beings we are imperfect, so we can never know reality for sure, but we will get as close as we can. Because positivism and postpositivism say there is one reality, their epistemology is based on the idea that it is up to us as humans to interpret that reality. Further, as there is only one reality, we have to be as objective as possible in order to reach that reality. So their methodologies are tied together to reflect their epistemology and ontology. They use manipulative and experimental types of research to try to increase objectivity in order to get closer to that reality.

Critical theorists would say that maybe there is only one reality, but it is fluid and dependent on sex, culture, and social class. These factors and more go together to influence this fluid reality, changing it based on who you are. Therefore, their epistemology is context-based; how you think about reality depends on the context. The methodology must reflect the ontology of a fluid reality. Here is where you can see the axiology come into play. Critical theorists recognize that if reality is fluid, then we can change it. So critical theory works on the ethic that their methodology is working toward social change. In their axiology it is up to researchers to change current reality to make things better for the people they are working with. The way I see critical theory is that it works toward social change and trying to improve current reality through understanding. This is also the basis of participatory research or action research, where researchers may say that reality is fluid and it is up to us as researchers to promote change.

Another major school of thought that has emerged in the past 30 years or so is constructivist theory. Constructivists believe that there is not just one reality (be it fixed or fluid), but that there are multiple realities. Different realities exist that are socially constructed. Together, we here today make our own reality, and that reality may be whatever we choose to make of it. Different societies will create their unique realities. So constructivists in their research methodologies need to find a mutual meaning of what this reality is.

These are the dominant western system research paradigms. Now as Indigenous researchers we need to move beyond these, beyond merely assuming an Indigenous perspective on these non-Indigenous paradigms. We might be able to say in critical theory that our fluid reality is affected by our culture as Indigenous people, our language, by all these different factors that would create an Indigenous perspective. Or if you look at an Indigenous ontology, it is similar to constructivism where there is more than one reality. But these views are still missing something. We need to go beyond this Indigenous perspective to a full Indigenous paradigm. Our ontology, epistemology, axiology, and our methodology are fundamentally different. Cora, Lewis, and I are all talking about how Indigenous research needs to reflect Indigenous contexts and world views: that is, they must come from an Indigenous paradigm rather than an Indigenous perspective.

One major difference between the dominant paradigms and an Indigenous paradigm is that the 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 of creation. It is

not just interpersonal relationships, not 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.

Who cares about these ontologies? It is not the realities in and of themselves that are important, it is the relationship that I share with reality. It is not necessarily an object that is important, it is my relationship with that object that becomes important. I was talking about this last night with my family. My father was saying how a couch or sofa in Cree translated literally means "someplace where you sit." Rather than calling it a sofa, rather than calling it an object, you name it through your relationship to it. You can extend this to say that ideas and concepts, like objects, are not as important as my relationship to an idea or concept. This language speaks from an epistemology that is totally foreign to the other research paradigms, an epistemology where relationships are more important than reality.

Our systems of knowledge are built on the relationships that we have, not just with people or objects, but relationships that we have with the cosmos, with ideas, concepts, and everything around us. For research it is important to think about our relationship with the ideas and concepts that we are explaining. Because this relationship is shared and mutual, ideas or knowledge cannot be owned or discovered. Appropriation of Indigenous culture and knowledge has taken place in the past when proper relationships have not been established and honored between researchers and their subjects. Knowledge and peoples will cease to be objectified when researchers fulfill their role in the research relationship through their methodology.

That leads me to the question: What is an Indigenous methodology? This is what we are here to talk about. To me an Indigenous methodology means talking about relational accountability. As a researcher you are answering to *all your relations* when you are doing research. You are not answering questions of validity or reliability or making judgments 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 how 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 fulfill 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*.

After we develop or articulate the beliefs behind an Indigenous research paradigm, we can look at the use of specific methods that fit with our methodology. A lot of people have tried to decolonize research methods. But they are deconstructing a method without looking at its underlying beliefs. You can change some methods to be really constructive and useful from an Indigenous perspective, and some fit well within an Indigenous paradigm. Other research methods are really built on the dominant paradigms, and they are inseparable from them. For

example, some of the positivistic methods do not fit well with an Indigenous paradigm.

Indigenous people have been attracted to some other research methods because they fit easily within our paradigm. That is why we have all dabbled with using talking circles (often justified by calling them focus group discussions) as a method because it coincides with the Indigenous epistemological importance of relationships. Storytelling and methods like personal narrative also fit the epistemology because when you are relating a personal narrative, you are getting into a relationship with someone. You are telling your (and their) side of the story and you are analyzing it. When you look at the relationship that develops between the person telling the story and the person listening to the story, it becomes a strong relationship. Participatory action research is also useful for Indigenous people because it aligns with our axiological beliefs. Action research may have been developed from constructivist or critical theory models, but it fits well into our paradigm because the idea is to improve the reality of the people with whom you work. In order to do this another relationship is encouraged.

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 relationship between myself as a researcher and my research topic? Does it build respectful relationships with the other participants in the research? Relationships with the idea or topic, as well as with the people or mice or trees or whatever you are working with, have to be considered.

Personally I spend a lot of time thinking, "Well what the heck are my methods?" I am not really using formal talking circles in my research, but discussions. A big part of my method has involved using intuitive learning. Many people don't trust their intuition. Some students or researchers come to university and their indigeneity gets revitalized somehow or another, but they are still missing something. The same sort of thing happens when people are reexperiencing Indigenous traditional spirituality. It becomes a new dogma for them. Rather than living the life and internalizing the things that they are learning about, all you can see are the external trappings. The external show becomes more important than the internal feeling and integrity of the Indigenous beliefs.

It is the act of living the beliefs that makes them real. Many people who have lost or been forced from their beliefs go through a stage of romanticizing when they come back to or rediscover their Indigenous heritage. We hope that living the external part will help them eventually to reach the point where they can internalize these ideas. During this internalization the relationship between the beliefs and the person starts to gain its strength, and Indigenous people start to trust their intuition and really start to grow. I hope that my own research and beliefs have reached this stage.

I had a discussion last fall with some of the other participants in my research, and it was not just about gaining knowledge from them, it was like mixing information, gathering, sharing, and analysis. Much of what I am learning I have been learning all my life, so it is a matter of checking in with other people, "Am I

on the right track?" It involves coming to an agreement about a mutually understood idea. The research is building the relationship with the idea of an Indigenous psychology and the idea of an Indigenous research paradigm. 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.

In response to a question from the audience regarding language, language loss and language use: A part of my work has been mastering language to find ways of explaining. Language mastery can be used in a bad way to make people feel small, or it can be used in a good way to explain concepts. Indigenous languages have words that do this, but there are words like that in English too. I don't think it is helpful to make people who cannot speak an Indigenous language feel bad about it. But I do think that it is important that everyone masters the language that they do speak. Mastery of language is really important to me, whatever that language is.