



**7th International e-Conference on Studies in
Humanities and Social Sciences**

***Multidisciplinary Indigenous research:
Preliminary findings of a scoping review of Canadian
scholarship (1997 to 2020).***

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Introduction and purpose of research

- ▶ Research in Indigenous contexts is associated with **colonialism** (Smith, 1999).
- ▶ In response to this, Indigenous scholars have **recentered** research on **Indigenous ways of knowing and doing** (Castellano, 2004; Chilisa, 2020; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008).
- ▶ This shift in the way in which Indigenous peoples are studied marks the advent of an “**Indigenous research paradigm**” (Wilson, 2008, p. 35).
- ▶ Indigenous research, therefore, distinguishes itself from Western research as it “**follows an ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology that is Indigenous**” (Wilson, 2008, p. 38).
- ▶ Furthermore, Indigenous research, as a **decolonizing** approach, disrupts the colonial logic that underlies researchers' perspectives and practices (Chilisa, 2020).
- ▶ There is also a growing interest in Indigenous knowledge systems and in decolonial studies which has led this “**fifth paradigm**” to gain momentum and prominence among researchers (Chilisa, 2020, p. 19).



Is an Indigenous paradigm right for everyone?

- ▶ Is Indigenous research always being conducted according to the principles set out by Indigenous scholars?
- ▶ Indeed, Indigenous research entails that Indigenous people have control over their own knowledge (Battiste & Henderson 2000) and requires that researchers share power and conduct research ethically, for the benefit of Indigenous communities (Battiste, 2008).
- ▶ Yet is this always the case?
- ▶ This scoping review on Indigenous research, therefore, **sets out to examine how the principles of Indigenous research have been applied in the last twenty years in Canadian scholarship across disciplines by looking at the diverse epistemological currents present, the multiple methodological approaches used, and the crucial role that researcher positionality plays in Indigenous research.**
- ▶ One of the anticipated outcomes of this research is finding strategies to assess the value and integrity of the research projects conducted under the banner of 'Indigenous research'



Researcher Positionality

- ▶ Positionality statements promote transparency and rigour by acknowledging the author's background and how this may impact the research (Carter, et al., 2014; Martin, 2017).
- ▶ As a Mexican immigrant woman living in Montreal, on the unceded territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) Nation, I position myself as an "Indigenist" ally, understood as "a movement that works collaboratively towards Indigenous peoples' goals for sovereignty and self-determination" (Battiste, 2013, p. 74).
- ▶ This research, therefore, stems from my personal interest in Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies and my hope is that it will help researchers navigate the complexities of Indigenous ways of doing research and that it will assist them in deciding if this approach is right for them.



Methodology: Scoping review

- This scoping review on Indigenous research is based on Arksey & O'Malley's (2005) methodological framework (first five steps) and Kovach's (2012) conversational method (sixth step).
- 1) Identifying the broad research questions that clearly articulate the scope of inquiry of the review,
- 2) Identifying the relevant studies through an elaboration of a database search strategy,
- 3) Study selection (with inclusion and exclusion criteria),
- 4) Charting the data by synthesizing it according to key concepts and themes,
- 5) Collating, summarizing, and reporting results, including descriptive numerical analysis and qualitative thematic analysis.
- 6)- The sixth methodological step is a consultation exercise with stakeholders and experts in the field to validate the study findings and interpretations (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005, p. 23-29). At this point, the final step of the review is in progress.



Research questions:

- 1) What are the distinctive **Indigenous methodological approaches** presented in these studies? How do they set Indigenous research apart from other research approaches?
- 2) What are the **main Indigenous epistemological/theoretical frameworks** found in the reviewed Indigenous research? Do these epistemologies constitute variations within a unified Indigenous epistemological paradigm?
- 3) **How do most researchers position themselves?** What is the connection between researchers' positionalities and their epistemic and methodological choices? What are some of the learning and/or training foundations presented in these studies that enabled Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers to conduct Indigenous research? What are some of the implications of researcher positionality that can be drawn from these studies? How does self-reflective researcher positionality serve to guarantee that Indigenous knowledge systems are not distorted?

Prisma figure for final selection of articles for scoping review



RESULTS

Table 1:
Selected studies by discipline (1997-2015).

Topics and subtopics researched	Tot = 23	References:
Education	Tot = 11	
Post-secondary education.	3	Graveline, 2001; 2002. Restoule, 2005.
Indigenous & non-Indigenous teacher education	2	Kitchen et al., 2010. Kerr & Parent, 2015.
Social work post-secondary education	2	Dumbrill & Green, 2008. Clark et al., 2010
Indigenous pedagogy/education & culturally relevant education.	4	Sterling, 2002. Alteo, 2009. Bell, 2013. Lavoie, Mark & Jenniss, 2014.
Health:	Tot = 9	
Traditional Indigenous healing practices	3	Edge & McCallum, 2006; Iseke, 2010; 2011.
Mental health wellness	4	Hanson & Hampton, 2000; Lavallée & Poole, 2009; Lavallée 2009. Pazderka et al., 2014.

RESULTS

Table 2:
Selected
studies by
discipline
(2016-2020).

Topics researched	Tot = 23	References:
Health:	Tot = 13	
Traditional Indigenous healing practices	7	Howell, Auger, Gomes, Brown & Leon, 2016. Tobias & Richmond, 2016. Sasakamoose, Bellegarde, Sutherland, Pete & McKay-McNabb, 2017. McGinnis, Tesarek Kincaid, Barrett & Ham, 2019. Smith, McDonald, Bruce & Green, 2019. Leigh Drost, 2019. Rowe, Straka, Hart, Callahan, Robinson & Robson, 2020.
Youth mental health wellness Youth wellbeing	1 1	Morris, 2016. Petrucka, Bickford, Bassendowski, Goodwill, Wajunta, Yuzicappi, Yuzicappi, Hackett, Jeffery & Rauliuk, 2016.
Sexual health	2	Gesink, Whiskeyjack, Suntjens, Mihic, & McGilvery, 2016. Maranzan, Hudson, Scofich, McGregor & Seguin, 2018.
Substance use disorders treatment	2	Marsh, Cote-Meek, Young, Najavits & Toulouse, 2016. Marsh, Marsh, Ozawagosh & Ozawagosh, 2018.
Education	5	
Indigenous pedagogy. Culturally relevant education.	5	Deer, 2016. Robinson, Barrett & Robinson, 2016. Stelmach, Kovach, Steeves, 2017. Twance, 2019. Freeman, Martin, Nash, Hausknecht & Skinner, 2020.
Food sovereignty/knowledge	3	Martens, Cidro, Hart & McLachlan, 2016. Bagelman, Devereaux, & Hartley, 2016. Delormier, Horn-Miller, McComber & Marquis, 2017.
Social work Practice in Indigenous communities.	2	St-Denis Walsh, 2016. St-Denis Walsh, 2017.

Research Methods & protocols. Stated impacts	Tot 23	knowledge creation	Capacity building	Revitalization of traditional healing and teaching	Positive Identity formation	Relationship building	Decolonizing	Greater consideration of IK as valid knowledge.
PAR: participatory-action-research & community-based research	8	x	x			x	x	x
Elder involvement and guidance in the research process	12	x	x	x	x	x	x	X
Talking circles	11	x		x		X		
Storytelling/ Storywork	11	x		x	x	x	x	
Unstructured interviews	5	x	x	x				
Ceremony Feasting.	7	x		x		x		
Digital stories – audio and video recordings	1	x	x	x		x		x
Anishnaabe symbol-based reflection	1	x		x	x	x	x	x
Culturally relevant programs	2	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Poetry/metaphoric narratives	3	x		x			x	

RESULTS:

Table 3:

Research methods used and community impacts of Indigenous methodologies (1997-2015).

Research Methods & protocols. / Stated impacts	Tot: 23	Knowledge creation	Capacity building	Revitalization of traditional healing and teachings	Living documents (digital stories& videos)	Positive Identity formation	Relationship building	Restoring food security	Greater consideration of IK as valid knowledge.
PAR: participatory-action-research.	21	x	x				x	x	x
Elder involvement and guidance in the research process	21	x	x	x			x	X	x
Talking circles Health circles Sharing circles Focus groups circles	14	x		x			x	x	
Storytelling/ Storywork	13	x		x		x	x	x	
Semi-structured Interviews/ Conversational method	8	x		x					
debriefing Focus groups/circles	3						x		
Digital stories – audio and video recordings	1	x	x	x			x		x
Feasting	1	x		x			x	x	x
Auto-ethnography	2	x	x	x		x	x		x
Field notes and observations	2	x							

RESULTS

Table 4:
Distribution
and impacts of
Indigenous
methodologies
(2016-2020).

Indigenous Epistemological principles used/ theoretical frameworks	Post-secondary education / teacher education	Indigenous pedagogy / culturally relevant education	Social work Teaching and practice	Mental Health/ Treatment and recovery	Health and holistic wellness	Sexual Health / Violence	Traditional healing practices	Food (knowledge and Indigenous practices)	Natural resource management
Sustainable self-determination								x	
Nehiyaw Cree epistemology		x				x	x		
Medicine Wheel	x	x		x		x	x	x	
4 Rs (respect, reciprocity, responsibility, relevance)	x	x		x					
Ethical space				x		x	x		
Anishinaabe "All our relations"	x	x	x	x		x	x	x	x
IQ (Inuit TK)				x		x			x
Warrior philosophy			x						
Two-Eyed seeing approach				x		x			x
Post-colonial / anti-colonial	x	x	x				x		
Decolonizing perspective	x	x	x	x			x	x	x
The Two-Row Wampum: Treaty perspective									x
Sweat Grass porcupine quill box									
Nuu-chah-nulth philosophy		x							
7 Grand Father Teachings	x	x							
Critical Tribal theory	x			x					
Indigenous storywork.	x			x				x	
Ethical relationality.	x			x					
Nlakapamux cultural knowledge and teachings		x							

RESULTS:

Table 5:
Area and topic-specific uses of Indigenous epistemologies (1997-2020)

Emic/insider research:

Self-Identified Indigenous researcher.
Close ties to an Indigenous community and/or kinship ties to community members.
Privilege relationship with Elders.
Privilege relationship with a specific land/place, Ecological place-based knowledge;
Knowledge/familiarity with an Indigenous language.
Knowledge/familiarity with cultural protocol (i.e., tobacco).
Epistemology lived as a personal philosophy/way of life.
Prioritizing that research benefits directly Indigenous communities.

Insider/outsider research:

Mixed research team that claims both positionalities (insider and outsider) and used both positionalities in research.

Sometimes uses a mixed method approach with some Indigenous and some non-Indigenous methods/epistemologies.

Might use an Indigenous theoretical framework based on the Indigenous culture/origins of the Indigenous researchers.

Outsider research:

Research team made up exclusively of Euro-Canadian researchers.
Recognition of Settler identity.
Trained in Euro-Canadian education.
Working relationships with Indigenous participants/communities/organizations.
'Book knowledge' of Indigenous epistemologies
Indigenous epistemologies not lived as a personal philosophy.

Working actively to disrupt it and decolonize research.
Seeking long-lasting relationships with Indigenous communities even if this is sometimes impossible beyond the completion of a research project.

RESULTS: Table 6:

Locating positionality in Indigenous research.

Researcher positionality	Relationality with Indigenous communities.	Epistemological choices and articulation of theoretical framework	Methodological choices.
<p>Insider/Indigenous positionality. Self-identified Indigenous researcher. Connected to place-based knowledge system, Lived/embodied philosophy. Close ties with Elders. Strong relationship with a specific community/land/place.</p> <p>Examples: Nicole Bell (2013), Lynn Lavallée (2009) and Smith (2018).</p>	<p>Strong sustained long terms relationships with Indigenous peoples.</p> <p>Ancestral ties to a community and/or family ties to community members.</p> <p>Personal involvement/close ties with Indigenous communities leads to prioritizing research participants as co-creator of knowledge.</p>	<p>Clear articulation of an Indigenous epistemology with identified place-based culture – well-grounded.</p> <p>Examples: Nicole Bell (2013), Anishnaabe cultural-based education is based on Anishnaabe teachings, linked to positionality.</p> <p>Smith (2018) and the "Sweetgrass and porcupine quill box" epistemology-based Ojibwe culture linked to positionality.</p> <p>Lavallée (2009) Anishnaabe symbol methodology based on Anishnaabe teachings linked to positionality.</p>	<p>Methods privilege Indigenous ways of knowing and doing.</p> <p>The methods chosen are clearly linked to the epistemological framework.</p> <p>Examples: Anishnaabe symbol-based reflection corresponds to Anishnaabe epistemology Lavallée (2009).</p> <p>Smith (2018) and the "Sweetgrass and porcupine quill box" methodology-based Ojibwe culture.</p>
<p>Insider/outsider research: Mixed research team: Includes both positionalities and used both positionalities in research.</p> <p>Examples: Morris (2016) with Inuit partners; Thorpe (1998) with Inuit partners and Latulippe (2015) with First Nation partners.</p>	<p>Strong sustained relationships with Indigenous peoples.</p> <p>Personal involvement/close ties with Indigenous communities leads to prioritizing that research benefits these communities.</p> <p>And</p> <p>Treaty partners: Outside allies working alongside Indigenous scholars.</p>	<p>Mainly uses an Indigenous theoretical framework clearly based on the Indigenous culture of the Indigenous researchers – no appropriation.</p> <p>Treaty perspective of respectful relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of knowing.</p> <p>Example: Natasha Thorpe (1998) used Inuit knowledge (IQ) as its epistemological framework related to mix team's positionality.</p> <p>Morris (2016) used IQ as theoretical framework in collaboration with Inuit women's association. Latulippe, (2015) Wampum belt framework used to reflect Treaty approach of respectful collaboration.</p>	<p>Mixed method approach with some Indigenous and some non-Indigenous research methods.</p> <p>Uses to its advantage the cultural differences of researchers:</p> <p>Indigenous research may conduct interviews, lead sharing circles with Indigenous participants for example.</p> <p>Example: Natasha Thorpe (1998) used her position to ask 'naïve' questions.</p> <p>Morris (2016) used survey and talking circles with Inuit Elders with Inuit facilitators.</p> <p>Latulippe, (2015) used Elders' guidance for research.</p>
<p>Outsider research: Settler researchers. Trained in Euro-Canadian education.</p> <p>Mostly book knowledge of Indigenous epistemologies.</p> <p>Working relationships with Indigenous participants/communities/organizations.</p> <p>Examples: Robinson, Barrett, and Robinson (2016)</p>	<p>Identified as allies working alongside Indigenous community partners.</p> <p>Working relationships with Indigenous.</p> <p>Seeking long-lasting relationships with Indigenous cultures but this might not be possible beyond the research project as such.</p>	<p>Critical, Anti-colonial and decolonizing theoretical frameworks elaborated.</p> <p>Indigenous epistemology glossed over and vague, not based on a specific culture, the incongruity between researcher's (non-Indigenous) positionality and epistemology.</p> <p>For example: Robinson, Barrett and Robinson (2016) and Mi'kmaw culturally relevant physical education no specific reference to Mi'kmaw epistemology.</p>	<p>Use of decolonizing methodologies.</p> <p>Engage with Indigenous methods as an effort to honour and give voice to Indigenous participants.</p> <p>Example: The conversational method used by Robinson, Barrett and Robinson (2016).</p>

DISCUSSION:

Table 7:

Correlation between researcher positionalities, Indigenous methodologies, and Indigenous epistemologies.

Conclusion:

- Over the last two decades, Indigenous research has come into prominence.
- The most prominent form of Indigenous research is across contexts, as collaborations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers.
- This trend points to the fact that Indigenous knowledge systems are becoming less marginalized in the academy, yet, paradoxically, Indigenous researchers remain few in numbers.
- Coherence between a researcher's position, his epistemic stance, and his methodology are crucial as this will allow Indigenous knowledge systems to be protected from misrepresentation and distortion.
- Traditionally, Indigenous knowledge has been protected in communities by “knowledge keepers” who were responsible for safeguarding it and made sure that those who received it would protect it (Salmon, 2020).
- How can this be done in an academic context?
- By making sure that the Indigenous partners involved in research accompany non-Indigenous researchers in elaborating their theoretical frameworks and methodologies so that these are grounded in *relationships* and in specific place-based cultures (Hart, Straka, Rowe, 2017).
- Finally, the task of protecting Indigenous knowledge cannot just fall on the shoulders of Indigenous partners, non-Indigenous researchers must also take it upon themselves to internalize the research principles of Indigenous research outlined by Indigenous scholars.