

## Book Review of *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know*

Steffie Dmello, University of Ottawa, Canada

**T**he book *Kaandossiwin – How We Come to Know* by Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogizhigokwe) offers important insights into diverse methodologies for conducting Indigenous research by drawing on the experiences of Indigenous academic researchers. The author argues that Indigenous methodologies are often not viewed as valid and reliable methods of producing knowledge by the academia, which is dominated by Western worldviews. Hence, the primary goal of this book is to decolonize research by validating Indigenous methodologies and contributing to their knowledge systems. It aims to amplify the voices of Indigenous people by enabling researchers to conduct research grounded in Indigenous methods.

The eleven chapters in this book are thoughtfully organized into two sections: the first part comprises of four chapters that discuss the author's positionality, and the process of data collection. In the second section, the author presents the results by using the metaphor of a Petal flower and builds upon each part of a flower to highlight its significance in relation to the Indigenous methodologies. She describes this flower as "the wholistic representation of Indigenous methodologies" (p. 48). The author begins the book by sharing her lived experiences and placing emphasis on connecting with the land, the spirit and an on-going search for knowledge. The author emphasizes that the word "research" carries a lot of colonial baggage and hence re-defines the term as "re-search" "meaning to look again" (p. 21), in order to reconsider ways of conducting research. This is done with an intention to challenge the colonial legacy embedded in Western academic traditions and reclaim Indigenous methodologies as valid ways of knowing (Kovach, 2021). She further emphasizes that the Indigenous researchers have heavily relied on Western epistemologies. She describes this as an "outsiders' interpretation of our reality" (p. 20) and hence advocates for empowerment of "aboriginal knowledge, epistemologies, paradigms, philosophies, practices and methods" (p. 20). The metaphor of "berries" is used to illustrate the process of data collection and interpretation by comparing it to gathering berries, harvesting them and transforming them into jam. The author presents the harvest of her search within the Petal flower framework by identifying each component of the flower in relation to the Indigenous methodologies. This Petal flower framework is rooted in Indigenous epistemologies and decolonial research methodologies.

This Petal flower framework is described in the second part of the book, which is particularly intriguing, which includes chapters five to eleven. In this section, the Indigenous research process is explained in detail through the metaphor of a Petal flower. It begins with the foundation of the flower - the roots which provide support to the methodological process of searching. The author encourages researchers to situate themselves in the search and identify their motive and purpose for the research (the center of the flower). The leaves represent the organic process that one must follow while on their methodological journey. The stem acts as a backbone, symbolizing the inter-relationship and inter-dependence between the stem and the whole flower. The petals depict the spirit, heart, mind and body that helps in the articulation of the methodology. The academic environment plays a significant role in influencing the growth of the flower. The final chapter-Winding down the search, concludes by summarizing the importance of each part of the flower and offers recommendations on how to decolonize research tools while continuing the search for knowledge.

The structure of the book is well-organized. The author's ability to situate herself within the research is especially noteworthy, as the book feels personal and engaging, almost as though it speaks directly to the reader. She clearly articulates her stance as an Indigenous scholar advocating for the recognition and validation of Indigenous research methodologies. Her research is driven by the need to challenge colonial narratives, reclaim Indigenous ways of knowing, and offer a framework that reflects Indigenous epistemologies. She emphasizes that Indigenous methodologies are often dismissed as invalid within academic spaces, and her work seeks to decolonize research by demonstrating their legitimacy, relational

depth, and holistic nature (Virtanen et al., 2021). I also value how her arguments are reinforced with examples from the theses of various researchers.

Absolon also acknowledges the difficulties in translating oral traditions into written text in academia. I appreciate the discussions about oral knowledge and the challenges of translation in chapter ten. The author argues that oral knowledge has not been regarded as valid knowledge within academia which is heavily dominated by Western narratives (Smith, 2021). She highlights how different researchers have found it difficult to describe or express their oral histories and “how in appropriate it was to have to use English to describe Indigenous worldviews and contexts” (p. 155). Oral knowledge acts as a way of building trust and sharing information and ideas in Indigenous communities (Smith, 2021) and hence the author calls for re-imagining and re-expressing oral knowledge. Additionally, in chapter 6 the author places emphasis on location and how it impacts the process of collecting data. She argues that location plays a crucial role, especially while conducting Indigenous research, since it “reveals a worldview and cultural orientation, which is central to what and how we search” (p. 72).

I deeply appreciate the refreshing and flexible approach Absolon offers in her Petal flower framework. The framework’s emphasis on fluidity and relationality aligns well with the nature of Indigenous knowledge systems. The book successfully opens up avenues for rethinking research methodologies and serves as an important foundational contribution to the field. Although it is recommended that Indigenous methodologies should be used by Indigenous researchers, they also offer valuable guidance for non-Indigenous researchers. It provides us non-Indigenous researchers with a way for understanding how knowledge is situated, relational, and deeply embedded in land-based and community-centered ways of knowing. It challenges us to critically reflect on our positionality, ethical responsibilities, and the ways we engage with different knowledge systems.

Overall, this book thoughtfully addresses the key elements necessary for conducting Indigenous research while challenging the dominant Western research methodologies which have denied Indigenous knowledge for years (Smith, 2021). It emphasizes learning not just as an intellectual exercise but as a lived, embodied experience, particularly for Indigenous communities. It encourages a shift away from rigid, step-by-step processes toward more adaptable, reflective approaches and highlights the importance of preserving and respecting oral histories in educational settings. It offers Indigenous researchers the Petal flower framework for decolonizing their research practices, creating a more inclusive, reflexive and respectful learning environment that honors Indigenous methodologies and knowledge systems. It encourages a shift toward more holistic, flexible, and relational approaches to education, which have the potential to transform how knowledge is taught and understood in academic settings.

In conclusion, *Kaandossiwin* is more than just a guide to research. It is a celebration of Indigenous knowledge systems and a call to action for Indigenous scholars to reclaim their voices. This book is an essential read for anyone dedicated to understanding Indigenous ways of knowing and supporting decolonization of academic spaces.

## REFERENCES

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Steffie Dmello** is a PhD student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Ottawa. Her research focuses on exploring the relational dynamics between children and the natural world by employing methodologies such as multispecies ethnography. She aims to challenge the dualistic perspectives in education by emphasizing the interconnectedness of humans and more-than-humans. Drawing from both Asian and Western epistemologies, her research seeks to foster a deeper understanding of ecological relationships within educational contexts.