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Indigenist and Decolonizing Memory Work Research Method

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Abstract

Indigenous researchers innovate and forge their own methodological paths within the realm of academic research. I developed an Indigenist and Decolonizing Memory Work method when I was unable to find a pre-existing approach for investigating phenomenon in-between Indigenous and Euro-western worldviews. This method is informed by the Euro-western methods of autoethnography, memory work, and collective biography. Furthermore, the Indigenous story work method along with other Indigenous research principles and practices are central features. In particular, I recognize and acknowledge that any Indigenous research project is situated from and within an Indigenist standpoint, in this case my own Labrador Inuit worldview. However, there is consistency with other Indigenous principles and together these influence the research process. It also was imperative that the methodology account for the colonizing features of both academic research and the fact that Indigenous research participants have been influenced in varying degrees by dominant Euro-western discourses. To account for this reality, a central feature of this method is the Decolonizing Critical Reflection (DCR) approach that replaces the typical interview and is intended to elicit decolonized data, or memories that research participants analyze themselves using Indigenizing and decolonizing theory and perspectives. The DCR approach is explained and described.

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous peoples 'walk in two worlds.' Less recognized is our need to routinely navigate in-between the worldviews of the colonizer and the colonized in both research and practice. In this article, I describe an Indigenist and Decolonizing Memory Work research method that emerged from my incursion in-between the worldviews inherent within Indigenous and Euro-western research paradigms. My goal was to access contemporary Indigenous social work praxes, or practice wisdom, for navigating in-between Indigenous and Euro-western worldviews and to make these teachings accessible to students and practitioners. I was unable to find a pre-existing research method that responded to the critiques by Indigenous researchers of Euro-western research; that recognized the realities of Indigenous researchers being situated in a Euro-western academic context; and that responded to the need to produce a decolonized text.

This work is situated in the field of integrative science and grounded in the guiding principle of two-eyed seeing as it is "an initiative designed to bring together different worldviews" (Bartlett, Marshall, Marshall, Iwama, 2012, p. 3). However, I explicitly chose to come from a position of cultural strength by striving to write, research, and represent from an Indigenous scientific platform while reclaiming and privileging my own Labrador Inuit worldview.

My first step in establishing an Indigenous and decolonizing methodology was to determine my own Inuit-Indigenist standpoint. I then discuss how colonization has implicated our minds and our memories and must explicitly be targeted for decolonization in the research process. I then describe how I drew on Indigenous and Euro-western research methods to construct an Indigenist and Decolonizing Memory Work method that features Decolonizing Critical Reflection (DCR) in place of a traditional interview. The DCR process is described in detail.

AN INUIT – INDIGENIST STANDPOINT

In accordance with Indigenous protocol, I first identify as an Indigenous person and then as a professional and as a researcher (Martin, 2003). While I have mixed 'blood,' culturally and politically I am Labrador Inuit[1]. My Inuk grandfather originates from the now self-governing territory of Nunatsiavut, Labrador, Canada. He eventually settled outside the territory in North West River, Labrador, a community established as a Hudson Bay Company fur trading post. He was part of the last generation of traditional fur trappers in the region. I grew up in North West River and experienced the vestiges of our traditional way of life spending much of my time on the land. I went on to become the second social worker from my territory to complete a Bachelor of Social Work degree and the first to complete a Master of Social Work degree. I have been an Assistant Professor at a Maritime university for the past 20 years and am now positioned to be the first social worker from the region to complete a doctorate in social work. I have primarily worked as a practitioner, educator and researcher on issues pertaining to the healing and self-determination of Indigenous peoples and communities.

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[1] Inuit originate internationally from the Arctic regions of Canada, Alaska, Greenland and Russia (Inuit Circumpolar Council, 2014). Inuit means 'the People' and it is no longer considered appropriate to use the term 'Eskimo'.(Pauktuutit, 2006, p.2)

When compared to other Indigenous populations, there are considerably fewer sources about an Inuit worldview. Fortunately, when the Canadian territory of Nunavut was established in 1999, its government made a priority, through engaging with Elders as traditional knowledge keepers, to identify and articulate an Inuit ethnophilosophy as the means to develop Inuit-centered policies and practices. *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ)*[2] was the outcome and is "defined as Inuit ways past, present and future" (Tagalik, 2009-2010, p. 2). Tagalik (2009-2010) explains "*IQ* encompasses the entire realm of Inuit experience in the world and the values, principles, beliefs and skills which have evolved as a result of that experience. It is the experience and resulting knowledge/wisdom that prepares us for success in the future and establishes the possible survival of Inuit." (p.2). *IQ* also refers to the Inuit epistemology or "that which Inuit have always known to be true" (McGregor, 2012, p. 297). While there are variations amongst the diverse Inuit societies, *IQ* "has been recognized as being consistent with Inuit worldview as it is described in various Inuit circumpolar jurisdictions" (Tagalik, 2009-2010, p.1). Tagalik (2009-2010) points out that an Inuit worldview must be seen within the context of the knowledge continuum, the time continuum, and the relationship continuum. Furthermore, the Inuit Elders in Nunavut identified *maligait* (four big laws): working for the common good; respecting all living things; maintaining harmony and balance; continually planning and preparing for the future (Government of Nunavut, 2007; McGregor, 2012; Tagalik, 2009-2010) out of which emerge the IQ principles which are summarized in the table. These principles guided the evolution of the method, the research design and the research process.

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[2] Labrador Inuit dialect spelling is 'Inuit KaujimajatuKangit' (Anala, 2014, p. 2)

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ)

Pijitsirniq	serving a purpose or contributing to a community takes priority over individual interests
Aajiiqatigiinniq	consensus decision-making and working collaboratively towards a common purpose
Pilimmaksarniq	skills and knowledge acquired through observation and experiences and transmitted through the oral tradition; entails the ability to be practical and able to critically engage with ideas in order to affect meaningful change
Piliriqatigiinniq	collaborative relationships and recognition that all members have something to contribute
Qanuqtuurniq	being innovative and resourceful, improvisation, reflecting and considering options
Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq	we are part of the environment; all aspects are interdependent
Inuuqatigiitsiarniq	relationships and caring for each other; individual behaviour viewed within the context of the community
Tunnganarniq	fostering a good spirit by being open, welcoming and inclusive

Sources: (Arnakak, 2002; McGregor, 2012, Tagalik, 2009-2010; Whiak, 2004)

An Inuit method is congruent with other Indigenous methods due to consistency in principles and values such as communitism (Weaver, 2001) and attention to relationships (Cajete, 2000; Wilson, 2008). As an Inuk researcher I am to work for the common good in a manner that maintains harmony and accounts for the future. My intent is to contribute something to the community, not just to the academy. I must aim to work collaboratively with research participants and other Indigenous scholars in the knowledge generation process recognizing and respecting the gifts that each brings to the process. I must respect knowledge acquired both through observation and experience and well as transmitted orally. I am obliged to critically analyze ideas, to think deeply and to innovate when designing and implementing the research. I am to maintain a view that recognizes holistic interdependent connections, the need for caring relationships, the need for self-reliant individuals who can contribute to the community, and the need to foster good spirit by being welcoming and inclusive. I recognize that the past informs the present and the future and that there are high expectations for sharing.

COLONIZED MEMORIES

As Indigenous peoples, our experiences and subsequently our memories have been subjected to cognitive imperialism (Battiste, 2000) through our socialization into dominant Euro-western social systems such as the education system and professional institutions. Individually and collectively many Indigenous peoples including Indigenous researchers and research participants are vicariously, if not directly, implicated in the “soul wound” (Duran, 2006) inflicted on Indigenous peoples through Euro-western colonization experiences like forced relocations and residential schools. As a racially different ‘Other’, Indigenous peoples are subjected to external and internalized racism (Loppie, Reading, & Leeuw, 2014; Absolon, 2010). Within the context of research whereby the researcher has interpretative authority, research participants are at risk of having their knowledge re-interpreted through the perspectives of the researcher’s own cultural, disciplinary, and research traditions. The interpretative lens may still be colonized even if the researcher is Indigenous. Geniusz (2009) cautions that “Because of the colonization process, many of us no longer see the strength of our indigenous knowledge. Our minds have been colonized along with our land, resources and people” (p.105). By implication, Indigenous researchers are at risk for (mis)interpreting research data from a Euro-western mind frame as opposed to an Indigenous or ‘two-eyed seeing’ mindset.

Given that both Indigenous researchers and participants are at risk for interpreting events from a colonized mind frame I developed a process called Decolonizing Critical Reflection to decolonize the mind in the process of re-remembering events. The process, described later in the article, enables participants to have decolonized memories or representations of their experiences out of which emerges greater clarity with respect to the inherent wisdom and knowledge being used by the Indigenous participant.

GENERATING AN INDIGENIST AND DECOLONIZING MEMORY WORK METHOD

An Indigenist and Decolonizing Memory Work method is explicitly aligned with the *Indigenous Storywork* method (Archibald, 2008) as a means to enact Indigenous principles within research as well as to elicit experiential and cultural teachings through storytelling. In addition, the project was informed by *Memory Work* (Haug and Others, 1987) and its' post-modern derivative, *Collective Biography* (Davis & Gannon, 2006) as these were means to analyze memories for how individual experiences are socially, culturally and politically constituted. *Autoethnography* "is the use of personal experience to examine and/or critique cultural experience" (Ellis, 2013, p. 22) and has different epistemological underpinnings from the Indigenous storytelling tradition. Instead of attempting to categorize "indigenous self-representations as either autoethnographic or not–autoethnographic", the method takes an "autoethnographic sensibility" or "an attentiveness to the autoethnographic characteristics" (Butz & Besio, 2004, p. 354). Geniusz (2009) asserts that the researcher must "evaluate how they personally have been affected by colonization, rid themselves of the emotional and psychological baggage they carry from this process, and then return to their ancestral traditions" (p.9). In addition, participants analyze themselves and their own stories using the technique I developed called Decolonizing Critical Reflection. Given my premise that knowledge generation is a social enterprise, I also established for consultation during the process of researching, a "response community" (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, p.182) consisting of a network of academic and Indigenous colleagues including an advising Elder.

A critically reflexive, autoethnographic sensibility, occurs in parallel ways. First, a common thread weaves through many of the accounts of research by Indigenous scholars. Personal experiences brought them to their research questions and the 'self' remained an integral part of the research process (e.g., Absolon, 2011; Archibald, 2008; Kuokkanen, 2007). Speaking about *Biskaabiiyang* research, Geniusz (2009) explains that the "use of the first person is an important difference between *Biskaabiiyang* and other research methodologies" (p. 12). The intent is to examine how one "has been personally colonized" and submerges within "the very things that he or she is researching. From this position, the *Anishinaabe* researcher must acknowledge his or her personal connection to the research

… To do otherwise takes credibility away from the information presented and insults those who gave the *Anishinaabe* those teachings." (Geniusz, 2009: 12) From a research perspective, autoethnography offered the means to address these and other methodological interests. I chose to theorize autoethnography primarily from Pratt's (2008) conceptualization that autoethnography is a means of self-representation for Indigenous peoples and a direct challenge to the colonial ethnographic tradition. Secondly, the Decolonization Critical Reflection process does not simply elicit stories. Rather it entails a systematic process that enables the co-researcher participants to research their experiences (Fook, 2002) thereby producing a "self-study" (Phillips & Carr, 2006) of themselves and their praxis. These self-studies are Indigenous autoethnographic texts given that they serve to connect the participant to territory, is a means of giving the participant a political voice, has the potential to be decolonizing given the capacity to identify, critique and resist dominant discourses in society, and restorying one's reality (Whitinui, 2014). As opposed to individualistic notions of the 'auto', Indigenous scholar Whitinui (2014) claims that "the "self" is a reflection of the "collective" as we are always influenced by a myriad of social and cultural engagements and interactions"(p. 476).

Indigenous peoples have traditionally shared knowledge and practices through the mode of storytelling (Archibald, 2008; Cruikshank, 1998; McGrath, 2011) that also indicates a fundamental capacity for reflection and a valuing of experiential knowledge or practice wisdom (Kuokkanen, 2007). Indigenous stories whether traditional or life-experience are 'Indigenous' because embedded within are "the worldview(s) that construct our (Indigenous) understanding of the world" (Archibald 2008, p. 104) and are intended to provide "cultural or experiential teachings" (Cruikshank, 1998, p. xii). Storytelling entails an interrelationship between the teller and the listener or reader. Both are positions of responsibility that require reflection and patience in the process of meaning-making (Archibald, 2008, p. 89). Stories are open to multiple interpretations in either the telling or the receiving (Archibald, 2008, p. 104). Archibald (2008) highlights the possibilities inherent within stories given that they can "also enable us to link traditional knowledge to the contemporary context"; "heal emotions and the spirit"; "establish relationships"; and, can be used in "building bridges to common understanding" (p. 104, 98, 108). Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, & T'lakwadzi (2009) point out the "danger in allowing colonization to be the only story of Indigenous lives" as it inherently centers the colonizer's power (p.139). To counter this risk, he argues that we also must bring to light Indigenous stories of resilience and resurgence (Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, & T'lakwadzi 2009). Furthermore, Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadzi (2009) contend that the "dominant version of history" can be "restoried" through the practice of Indigenous storytelling that also entails questioning the imposition of colonialism (p. 138, 139).

The seven storywork principles that Archibald (2008) identified are "respect, reverence, responsibility, reciprocity, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy" (p.2). She also provides teachings that serve as a pragmatic guide for respectful story listening and retelling. One must have "patience and trust (when) preparing to listen to stories" and "listening involves the senses of, hearing, visualizing and feeling" (Archibald, 2009, p. 8, 21). Especially intriguing is that "stories can be heard again and again, the meanings that one makes or doesn't make from them can happen at any time" (Archibald, 2009, p. 24). When I represent stories I am compelled to consider, "How can the story be portrayed so that its power to make one think, feel, and reflect on one's actions is not lost? And, can the cultural context be sufficiently developed so that the listener/viewer can make story meaning?" (Archibald, 2009, p. 81) In my research, I strived to provide enough social, political, cultural and theoretical context to enable listeners and readers to make sense and meaning of the stories.

The recall of experiences is typically unproblematically accepted as research data. But accepting an external event as 'evidence' reproduces rather than challenges the ideological forces, including colonizing ideologies that construct the event and how it is perceived (Scott, 1992). It is with this analysis that feminist methodologists developed the Memory Work and Collective Biography methods. Stephenson & Papadopoulos (2006) explain that "memory-work is not a fixed method," but rather is "an open set of tools" for researching "different configurations of both experience and the socio-political realm" (p. 50). Memory Work entails a "search for intelligibility" (Crawford et al., 1992, p. 8) through a process that:

> allows a group of people, engaged collectively, to examine how they have been socialized and how they participate in their socialization within a culture… The aim of memory-work is consciousness of how we shape and are shaped: how we

> see, feel, and think about the world in very particular ways. (Kaufman et al., 2003, p. 2)

Stephenson and Papadopoulos (2006) contend that “memory work theoretically and pragmatically dismantles the false dichotomies of the psychological /sociological personal/political; subject/object; theory/ experience; researcher/researched” (p.53). With respect to the phenomenon of interest and the unit of analysis, Crawford et al. (1992) explain, “it is the construction (memory) we are interested in, not the event, because the construction tells us something about the way the person relates to the social” (p.8). Furthermore, she alludes to the process of analysis and interpretation asserting,

> we reconstruct our memories as we find new and different or more satisfying meanings according to our later life experiences and the changing social order in which we live. *We retrospectively shed new light on old events; we reinterpret old events from new knowledge* (Crawford et al.,1992, p.8, emphasis added).

Haug and Others (1987) contends that Memory Work bridges theory and experience, meaning “experience is interpreted and understood as a broader and shared phenomenon” (Kaufman, Ewing, Montgomery, Hyle, & Self, 2003, p. 2). Haug and Others (1987) claim “the right to use experience as the basis of knowledge, as ways past experience may offer some insight into the ways we construct ourselves into existing relations**”** and thereby reproduce a social formation (p. 34). This meant, “In work with memories, the ‘evidence of experience’ is no longer treated as innocent or transparent but is seen to be constituted through language, discourse and history” (Davis & Gannon, 2006, p. 2). Stephenson and Papadopoulos (2006) caution that Memory Work

> does not provide a neat solution … (but) does go some way towards providing a way of working with experience without falling into the trap of defending and affirming experience *per se*... (rather) experience is simultaneously envisaged as socially (or collectively) produced and amenable to being reworked or re-interpreted. (p. 52-53)

The research endeavor itself is understood to be “not simply a matter of representation, but involves (knowingly and unknowingly) intervening in and constructing our current social and political conditions” (Stephenson & Papadopoulos, 2006, p. 50). Hence, the Memory Work framework provided a means for the co-researcher participants to gain insight into how we construct (and) deconstruct ourselves within colonizer/colonized relations. Additionally, it enabled me to ask, what experiential knowledge is generated from these encounters that maintain, resist, and transform how these encounters are both structurally and socially constituted? Furthermore, it conferred a methodological legitimacy with respect to my intention to understand and begin to theorize the collective through an investigation of individual experiences.

Memory Work embodies and enacts the feminist tenet that the "the personal is political" and has an explicit goal of furthering emancipatory thinking and action (Crawford et al., 1992, p. 4). Co-researcher participants, engaged collaboratively, analyze, interpret, and theorize from the data. The process entails steps that rework the traditional power relations between objective researcher and subjective researched by making the researchers the subjects of the research (Stephenson & Papadopoulos, 2006). It leads to individual and collective conscientization and thereby generates emancipated interpretations and theorizations of the phenomenon of interest. In summary, Memory Work is "research as praxis" as advocated by Lather (1986). In my modified process, the analysis and interpretation of the memories is done through a collaborative process between the research and co-researcher participant as opposed to the group format inherent in the Memory Work method.

DECOLONIZING CRITICAL REFLECTION

As an alternative to the typical interview, I re-theorized Fook's (2002) and Jackson's (2008) educational methods into a "Decolonizing Critical Reflection" research process for systematically eliciting, analyzing and interpreting practice-based memories that are recalled in response to the research question. The process has the twin goals of enabling a 'Good Mind' (2008) and eliciting decolonized data. A Good Mind is grounded in an Indigenous ethos. DCR is designed to interrogate memories for colonizing influences, to unearth the underpinnings of an Indigenous worldview, and to elicit practice based experiential teachings. Through the DCR process the research participant analyzes and interprets their memories. In other words, their experiences are re-remembered from a decolonized and Indigenous-centered perspective. Indigenous, critical, decolonizing, anti-colonial, post-colonial, and experiential knowledge theories are used in the process of interpretation. Using an Indigenous-centered storytelling approach, reflective meaning-making is brought to bear on the story in order to reveal its' 'teachings' which constitute worldview characteristics as well as personal, professional, and cultural experiential knowledges. The co-researcher participants in collaboration with the primary researcher "disrupt existing (or dominant) theory" with respect to how research participants should know and understand their experiences (Davis & Gannon, 2006, p. 4). Individual autoethnographies are produced through this collaboration.

Through the DCR process the experiences are analyzed and interpreted. DCR gives the participant co-researcher interpretative authority over their own practices by enabling them to produce their own self-study. Wilson (2008) concurs stating "if reality is based upon relationships, then judgments of another's viewpoint is inconceivable. One cannot possibly know all the relationships that brought about another's ideas. Making judgments of others' worth or values then is also impossible" (p.92). The primary researcher can subject these autoethnographies to a thematic meta-analysis. These insights, meanings and lessons, while emerging from individual experiences, in effect comprise a communal re–remembering of shared praxes within the in-between. Stories from an Indigenous storytelling tradition engage tellers and listener/readers in a teaching / learning relationship. Teaching and research representation and dissemination both denote 'sharing'. A reciprocal and recursive process that entails sharing and receiving gifts of insight/knowledge is inherent in stories (Archibald, 2008).

The DCR approach follows are particular systematic process. First, the primary researcher provides an overview and orients the co-researcher participant to the DCR process. The co-researcher participant identifies and describes an 'intercultural encounter' or their memory of an event that they have directly experienced. The primary researcher, using the question posing framework (described below), asks questions for the participant to contemplate in a manner that enables a progressively deeper introspection gaze into and analysis of their worldview and colonizing influences. The primary researcher through the questioning technique then guides the participant to reach some tentative interpretations or understanding with respect to their praxis within the context of being in-between worldviews. The primary researcher may also ask the participant as to his/her future intentions with respect to his/her praxis in light of their new insights.

The co-researcher participants are positioned as researchers of their own experiences and practices. In other words, the participants, as opposed to the academic researchers, investigates, analyzes, and interprets their own contextualized experiences. This serves to address, although not completely reconcile, the inequitable power relations between the participants and the primary academically situated researcher. There isn't an ideal number of participants, although I settled on six to eight Indigenous social workers with expertise within the in-between. I found that participants with higher education and more practice experience have greater comfort and ease with the process. There are a number of complexities and intricacies associated with the setting not the least of which is the effort and investments required to build relationship with the research participants, to establish my own credibility, and to facilitate through the DCR 'interview' process. Interviews to date have spanned one to three hours. The data collected is rich and comprehensive.

The primary researcher assumes the role of "facilitator and provocateur" (Mezirow, 1997, p.11) by providing "guided participation" (Kaufman et al., 2003, p. 5) through formulating and asking critical questions. The primary researcher guides the co-researcher participants through an introspective analysis of an intercultural encounter story of an event that was at least in part constituted in-between worldviews. Participants are positioned as *co-researchers*. As opposed to owning the data, the primary researcher is a 'caretaker' of the individual and collective knowledge that is generated through the process. The co-researcher participants are 'co-owners' of their own autoethnographies that are produced from the DCR process. As opposed to the primary researcher having interpretive authority, the DCR process entails a collaborative systematic process whereby the primary researcher assists the co-researcher participants to interpret their own experiences. The process is also reciprocal in that the researcher acquires research knowledge while the participants acquire new knowledge that they can use to inform their current and future actions.

During the DCR session, co-researcher participants are asked to think of an 'intercultural encounter' that they personally experienced and are willingly to share, either verbally or in writing. An intercultural encounter is a situation or experience in which one is acutely aware of being Indigenous (identity, perspectives, or cultural contexts) because of what one perceives to be a lack of fit with the culture of the environment (individuals, communities, and/or institutions). These are likely situations in which one experienced stress, intense emotion, discomfort, and /or conflict. The event may be large or small. In other words, an intercultural encounter is a situation in which the co-researcher participant has an enhanced sense of being-in-two-worlds. Co-researcher participants are given the following directions for providing their accounts of their intercultural encounters:

- a description of a situation that lead to the incident including the background and context;
- a concrete description (unanalyzed account) of the incident including a brief description of their initial reaction and those of other significant people but without analysis and explanation;
- an explanation as to why the incident was significant especially why it was significant to them as an Indigenous person. (Informed by Fook & Gardner, 2007; Kemppainen, 2000; Montalvo, 1999)

The primary researcher uses the DCR Question Posing Framework to guide the co-researcher participants simultaneously *inward* to unearth the assumptions, values, and beliefs associated with each worldview and *outward* to make connections to the discursive, cultural, and political influences at the individual, institutional and societal levels.

Haug and Others (1987) point out that "starting with the obvious is not always helpful … (as) any set of ready- made questions is likely to be firmly rooted in popular prejudice and we found that obvious questions produced obvious and somewhat over-rehearsed responses" (p.53). The questioning process is vital to the successful use of this method and further distinguishes it from a typical interview. The intent is to ensure the co-researchers "resist the story" and critique "received ideas" (Haug & Others, 1987, p. 153, 165). The reflective stance provides a means "to approach our object from the standpoint of a disinterested observer" (Haug & Others, 198, p.153). The questions promote deep reflection on one's horizon of meaning (Vessey, 2009) and serves to "excavate" (McKee, 2003, p.405) below the surface of understanding to the depths required to reveal the "sediments" (Kaufman, Ewing, Hyle, Montgomery, & Self, 2003, p. 34) of Indigenous and Eurocentric worldview influences associated with one's individual and group-based socializations into Indigenous and dominate Euro-western societies as well as educational and professional cultures.

A basic version of the question posing framework is provided below. However, the actual questions used, while consistent with the framework, organically emerged through the primary researcher's interaction with each co- researcher participant.

- What are your assumptions?

- What values & beliefs are at play?
- Where do these come from?
- How do these values and beliefs link to your various socializations into the worldview(s)?
- How are power relations at play?
- What are the implications for Indigenous 'cultural safety'?[3]
- Based on your reflective analysis, what do you know about practicing in-between worldviews? How do you know it? Are you congruent /incongruent with how you want to /should practice? What changes will you make, what will you keep as part of your approach to practicing in the in-between?

CONCLUSION OR 'WALKING ON THE GRASS'

After an absence of several years, I returned to campus to start my doctorate degree. I recall noticing the concrete walkways that now infiltrated the lawns in what first appeared to be in rather unstandardized and incoherent patterns. I marveled at the numerous options that spread out before me. Unlike my previous times on campus in an earlier era, I no longer felt obliged to follow one predetermined 'right way' to get from point A to point B. Instead, I faced a web of possibilities that now intersected with the original walkways. I was taken with the insight that while the campus engineers had undoubtedly, with meticulous calculation and precision, identified and then defined, in 'concrete truth' the best means for students to traverse the campus, the students had enacted their own agency, forging their own paths through the grass. Over time, thousands tried countless ways to get from and to their destinations. Inevitably certain routes 'made sense' and a proportionally larger group of students followed suit reinforcing the pioneering footprints. Eventually, and likely over the span of many generations of students, these paths would become so well worn that the campus engineers would concede and pave the renegade pathways, thereby institutionalizing and legitimatizing them for everyday use. Yet, despite a now impressive array of options, there were still the telltale signs of new footpaths emerging from the dirt and displaced grass. I wondered, "which of these embryonic paths would eventually move from the status of 'deviant' to 'normal'?"

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[3] Culturally safe professional practices do not unwittingly "diminish, demean, and/or disempower" other people and communities but instead "recognize, respect and acknowledge" other cultures and rights (Wood & Schwass, 1993, p. 2).

My many years of socialization within both the mainstream education systems meant that I brought 'Imperial Eyes' (Pratt, 2008) to bear on the research design. However, I was not without the counter influence of my Indigeneity. I was also aware of and mindful of the power inherent in the roles of making, using, and sharing knowledge. This positioning created for me a disconcerting dilemma. On one hand, I was at great risk for making choices and taking actions that further perpetuated Euro-western imperialism in my mind as well as the minds of my participants and our audiences. On the other hand, I retained the possibility of opening up both space for Indigenous realities and ways-of knowing. Intellectually and morally, I resolved at the outset to resist the epistemic domination of Euro-centric thought and intentionally act in ways that re-righted its' relationship with Indigenous consciousness and practices. I first and foremost strived to create a research process in a 'good way'. To do so required a conscious engagement with my own Indigenous sensibility. Cajete (2000) asserts that "Native science is a reflection of the metaphoric mind" (p.4). The metaphoric mind precedes the rational mind which is privileged in Western science. He explains that "the metaphoric mind is the facilitator of the creative process; it invents, integrates, and applies the deep levels of human perception and intuition to the task of living… (and) has none of the limiting conditioning of the cultural order" (Cajete, 2000, p. 29-30). A primary task for Indigenous researchers is to first think ourselves out of our colonial conditioning in Euro-centric research in order to free our Indigenous minds to create new ways of being, knowing and doing that are relevant for contemporary times but are grounded within our Indigeneity. The Indigenist and Decolonizing Memory Work Methodology is one such aspiration.

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