

A Further Decolonization of the Indigenous Research Paradigm:

A 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model

By

Tammy Williams

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Approved: Dr. Sherry Pictou  
Co-Supervisor

Approved: Dr. Heidi Weigand  
Co-Supervisor

Approved: Debbie Eisan  
Elder Supervisor

Approved: Tuma Young  
External

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**Abstract**

This document details the research that I conducted in partial fulfillment of the Master of Arts in Women and Gender Studies program, provided by Saint Mary's University and Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. I used a Two-Eyed Seeing approach to further decolonize the existing Indigenous Research Paradigm, being inclusive of intersectional Indigenous communities' unique identities by engaging in story-acts with Indigenous storytellers from Mi'kma'ki, and using meaning making as a method of analysis through my own intersectional Mi'kmaw cultural identity. I developed two grand-tour questions to help focus the story-acts in response to this project: What kind of research projects have you participated in previously and what do you wish the researchers knew before they approached you? And how do you identify yourself? I developed a new research model, and a tool for Mi'kmaw community use, for future research projects.

April 16, 2021

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I thank my mother, Theresa Morris, and my Aunts Elizabeth (Doosy) Morris and Donna Morris for being my cultural guides as I grew up away from Mi'kma'ki. They taught me bravery, courage, humility, respect, and honour, among many other life lessons. I thank my grandfather, Ben Morris, who laughed at my childish jokes and would rub his hand over my face as a gesture of love; a gesture that I use today with my own grandchildren. I thank my Aunt Isabelle Knockwood, who taught me that taking on the system was possible. And importantly, I thank my grandmother, Rose Knockwood-Morris, your storytelling inspired me as a child to learn more, as a youth to listen more, and as an adult to pick up the talking stick and tell the stories of our ancestors, and to tell my own story. I am grateful for my extended family, the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre community and coworkers, and friends who supported me through this process and encouraged me to keep going when I felt my convictions waning under the constant strain

and hurdles that come with a personal decolonizing journey. I thank my students who encouraged me throughout the past year.

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## **FOREWORD**

*I want to tell a story about a talking stick...*

*When I was a child growing up in Hartford, Connecticut I saw a stick hanging on our wall every day. It was long and thin, and the bark had worn down in many places to the smooth wood underneath, it was decorated with a leather strap to hang it from the wall with beads and feathers hanging from the strap as it wound its way down the base. One end of the stick was jagged, but not splintered, like it had been broken off of a larger tree. The other end of the stick was shaped like a bird's head. Not a fully carved bird's head, but a rustic, interpretive head, that I thought only I could see. I learned that this stick was picked up by my grandfather, who then decorated it with the leather thong, beads and feathers. It was a talking stick, a tool used in talking circles by my family and their friends for many years, worn down through time and the sweaty palms that held it. I learned growing up that a talking stick was used to maintain the respect of actively listening while someone else is speaking. As my Grandmother and Great Aunt became authors when they grew older, they passed the proverbial talking stick to the next person who would tell a story.*

*Many years ago, my grandmother told a story. I sat at her knee while she described the woods that she grew up in and how she would follow her father through the woods as he led them to pick medicines, or find food, or to hide from the Indian Agents. Her mother followed the family from the rear, making sure that nobody wandered off or fell behind. She said she felt protected and safe, and that nothing bad could happen to her.*

*She passes the talking stick.*

*...My grandmother's sister, Aunt Isabelle also told stories. She told her story. Her story was about being taken away from the safety and protection of her mother and father.*

*Her story about the nuns and priests, about the other children, about her and her sister and brothers; her story about the Shubenacadie Residential School.*

*She passes the talking stick.*

*...My grandfather told a story about the time his son was misbehaving and got into trouble. His story was about consequences and respect. He told stories about his mother and her baskets that she would weave and bring into the city to make some money for food. He told stories about the clouds overhead and that when they looked like ocean waves rolling onto the shores they were called mackerel skies, and that the weather was about to change.*

*He passes the talking stick.*

*...My mother told me a story about her family life as a child. Her story was about love and pain, about her sisters and brothers, about her father and how he was stronger than anyone else she knew and was a hard act to live up to, about a mother who did everything she could to keep her children healthy, about growing up poor and finding wealth in the little things that made life more bearable.*

*She passes the talking stick.*

*...My Aunt Doosy told me many stories growing up. Her stories were about spirituality, or actual spirits. Her story about walking through Sipekne'katik and hearing noises coming from the ditch but not seeing anything and attributing it to ghosts (sk'te'kmuj). Her story about my grandfather, after his death, and how he reached out to her from the spirit world was about how our ancestors are always with us and keep us company.*

*She passes the talking stick.*

*...My Aunt Donna would tell the most amazing stories about Mi'kmaw legends and how Glooscap guided our relations the animals to live respectful, sustainable, and*



*humble existences with their relations and the other animals around them. She told stories about the animals reflect how we as humans should behave.*

*She passes the talking stick.*

*Each of these people, my Elders, teachers, guides and mentors while growing up, have used the talking stick to tell stories, and passed it along to the next person in line. Our stories tell us where we come from, what we believe to be true, how to live according to story-instilled values, what to fear, how to survive, and how to become resilient. Like the worn-down talking stick our stories go through generations of retelling, changing slightly with each one and just as the bark on the stick wears away and the core is revealed, the truth of the stories are revealed. As our sweat and bodily oils seep into the wood of the talking stick, our interpretations seep into the stories as we retell them. My Grandmother said that when we hear a story for the first time, we will learn something from it and when we hear it the second time, we will learn something new about it. “We learn what we need to know at that moment in time”, she said, and so we retell the stories over and over again, carrying our talking sticks while creating an oral history that has survived settler-colonial genocide attempts, and instilled values that have lasted throughout the centuries. I have picked up that talking stick and am going hold it while I tell my stories as I have become a mother, grandmother, student, and teacher.*

*I am picking up the talking stick.*

## ***Chapter 1 Setting the Stage for Story-acts (Introduction)***

### ***1.1 Positionality***

*I would like to start by acknowledging that we are in Mi'kmaw territory, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaw people.* How many times have we heard this statement at the beginning of meetings, symposiums, conferences, classes, even on radio announcements? What does it mean? Does it even have a meaning to the Mi'kmaq or is it just a saying that the systemic racism, patriarchal-colonial oversight of Mi'kmaw people, and the certainty that we will never get back the unceded territories are considered smoke and mirrors by many Indigenous peoples (Bundale, 2019). My thesis is not written about land, but land is an intricate, interwoven, and important part of the stories that will be told by myself and others. We as Mi'kmaq, are a part of the land, the land is part of our story, the land is where our ancestors were born, lived, and died and land is a reminder that our ancestors are with us, always. Mi'kma'ki, the unceded lands of the Mi'kmaw, is the main setting for my story is the world in which my stories take place. It is where the storytellers in this thesis reside currently, and while we travel outside of Mi'kma'ki during some of the story-acts (Price, Hartt, Cole & Barnes, 2019; Price, Hartt, Wall, Baker, Williams, 2019) in the upcoming sections, we return to Mi'kma'ki. So, I would like to start by acknowledging that we are in Mi'kmaw territory, my ancestral homelands, the unceded territory where my ancestors still reside and who still watch over me and as well as the lands until I eventually join them and become an ancestor myself.

### ***1.2 How to read this document***

This is an account of the research that I conducted and the journey that I took to get to where I am today. It is an exercise in Two-Eyed Seeing, and two-eared hearing, concepts that are inclusive of both Indigenous ontologies or worldviews, and western ones. The chapters are written with two styles. The italicized sections are stories, they are the

storytellers, myself included, picking up the talking stick to tell a story that contextualizes the western content through an Indigenous lens.

If a section is in italics and are quoted or being retold from a storyteller the storyteller is acknowledged, or cited, at the end of the passage. If the italicized section is not cited, then it is my story that I am sharing with the reader. The stories are interwoven in a way to decolonize the traditional format of a thesis document.

### ***1.3 Colonization as the Antagonist***

In storytelling, whether it is oral history or contemporary fiction, the force that is driving the main character, or protagonist, and the main character is the antagonist. The antagonist typically drives the protagonist to further develop their character, to grow, to change, and to develop goals that will drive the story forward. As I transform this storytelling approach into the documentation of my thesis, identifying the protagonist (me) as the one who is identifying the problem or antagonist, developing goals and actions to move the story forward and overcome the hurdles set forth by the antagonist, and find solutions for the issues that the antagonist wishes to keep in place, I will identify portions of this storytelling piece (thesis) using literary terms, or story elements, that are used by storytellers everywhere. There is a setting, or world in which the story-acts take place, protagonists, antagonists, a plot (methodology), a conflict and a (potential) resolution.

The antagonist in this story is the act of colonization, more specifically *settler colonialism*. In *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor* (Tuck & Yang, 2012), the authors state that,

“...settler colonialism has shaped schooling and educational research in the United States and other settler colonial nation-states. These are two distinct but overlapping tasks, the first concerned with how the invisibilized dynamics of settler colonialism mark the organization, governance, curricula, and assessment of compulsory learning, the other concerned with how settler perspectives and

worldviews get to count as knowledge and research and how these perspectives - repackaged as data and findings - are activated in order to rationalize and maintain unfair social structures” (p.2).

Settler Colonialism as antagonist, has a goal of assimilating Indigenous peoples, while exploiting Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) for appropriation and commodification to the benefit of the colonists, while maintaining a superior social status through external, internal, and military colonialism (p.4-5).

#### ***1.4 Indigenous Researchers as Protagonists***

Positioning myself as a Mi'kmaw academic who has listened stories with an Indigenous ear, I have heard the desire from my Elders, storytellers, and Indigenous peers to have our traditional methods of knowledge and ways in which we interact with the world acknowledged and valued within academia (Graveline, 2000). Academia has historically contributed to the marginalization of Indigenous people through positional superiority and through systemic racist stereotyping their positioning within the academy provided them with an expertise in the cultural, spiritual and educational needs of Indigenous people ever since the colonization of Turtle Island began<sup>1</sup>. Linda Tuhiwai-Smith speaks to the colonization of education that led to missionary and religious schooling; Residential Schools, here in Canada (1999, p.64). (1999, p.64). When a young person left the residential school and wanted to pursue a higher education, they were given a choice of education in return for disenfranchisement from their Indigenous status, culture, and homes; but they could get a degree...if a university would accept them (Dr.

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<sup>1</sup> *Turtle Island* is North America. Many Indigenous Creation stories include versions of Turtle Island as the first land mass on Earth where the first Indigenous woman created life. Anishnaabeg creation stories include Turtle Island and a matriarchal Creator, Star Woman. (Simpson, Leanne. ....)

Isabelle Knockwood, Mi'kmaw Elder, in conversation July 18, 2019).<sup>2</sup> Dominant practices in the production, storage, and access to knowledge in academia is still a systemic issue as we strive for reconciliation with Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, but changes are slowly taking hold as Indigenous research methods and methodologies are being developed and improved upon.

### *1.5 Story Conflict (Thesis Argument)*

The Medicine Wheel has been researched extensively by Western academics after the discovery of the stone foundations in Wyoming (Grinnell, 1922). Anishnaabeg have used the medicine wheel traditionally to conceptualize a person who is in balance with the world around them, and that balance is derived from caring for their mind, body, spirit and emotions. The medicine wheel also relates the cycles of a persons' life as they move around the circle from infant to youth, to adult, to elder. This balanced approach to Indigenous healing has been adapted through time to develop health and physical education programs, treatment programs for addictions, mental health programs and more.

I am proposing that the development a 7-Direction Indigenous Research Paradigm that utilizes the holistic nature of the Anishnaabeg Medicine Wheel as a framework will further decolonize research and engagements while respecting unique Indigenous Nations' diverse epistemologies and ontologies. I will build upon the four original areas of the IRA, pioneered by the Maori people, and the four elements of the Indigenous Research Paradigm shared by Canadian and Australian Indigenous researchers (Tuhuwai-Smith, 1999; Smith, 2008). The new model has the flexibility to provide western academia's need

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<sup>2</sup> Isabelle Knockwood is my Great-Aunt. She is my maternal grandmother's sister and wrote, "Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia (1999)". She had to decline her degree in Nursing after completing her courses because doing so would mean that she was "no longer Indian" in the eyes of the government.

for qualitative and quantitative data collection and evaluation by using a Two-Eyed Seeing approach, which can incorporate Indigenous and western methods.

The tool that I develop as a part of this thesis and for the use of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people wishing to engage in research and partnerships with Indigenous Nations, organizations and individuals will provide a template for participating in respectful, diverse, decolonized partnerships using both Indigenous and Western methods. The Two-Eyed Seeing approach to the development and actioning of this tool will provide areas where benchmarks for evaluations, measurements, and datapoints for quantitative research can be constructed (Bartlett, Marshall, and Marshall, 2012), if necessary, for future research projects. Two-Eyed Seeing identifies what is valuable to both Indigenous and Western viewpoints, and while engaging with community partners can be inclusive of more quantitative methods, while maintaining respectful, culturally relevant, reciprocal relations.

The new paradigm will expand upon the original four areas (*marked with a \**) of the IRA and IRP with an additional three areas to engage in:

1. Consultation and Research to identify intersectional identities and ontologies
2. Epistemological lessons and best practices \*
3. Ontological approaches to holistic inclusivity and diversity \*
4. Axiological considerations and approaches \*
5. Indigenous Methodologies and Methods \*
6. Two-Eyed Seeing methodology using Story-Act and Meaning Making.
7. 7-Direction Indigenous Research Paradigm is at the centre of the medicine wheel

The purpose of the tool is to help researchers, working partners and those wishing to engage in reconciliatory efforts in the initial engagement process by providing a guide on how to respectfully approach Indigenous communities, organizations and partners.

## ***1.6 Research Questions***

I argue that each individual Indigenous Nation has a unique approach to their view of the world and this approach should be respected, rather than disenfranchised. The unique approaches can provide distinctive understandings by including contextualized information that has been passed down through oral histories that have survived thousands of years.

Miriam Webster Dictionary defines Methodology as: “1 : *a body of methods, rules, and postulates employed by a discipline : a particular procedure or set of procedures.*”<sup>3</sup> Using the definition of methodology as it pertains to research, the Medicine Wheel, which has been used as a method historically, could be developed into a full methodology using a Two-Eyed Seeing approach that encapsulates traditional Mi’kmaq beliefs and ethical approaches to Indigenous Research, as guided by the lessons learned while engaging in relationship-building, as I “enter the ontological tent” to borrow a phrase from Dr. Tallbear (University of King’s College, 2019) while still addressing the western academic lens.

My story-act will address the gaps in the current IRP and IRA related to unique Indigenous identities by answering the question: “How can we approach urban-Mi’kmaq peoples in a respectful and meaningful way on their own terms based on their ontological

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<sup>3</sup> "Methodology | Definition of Methodology by Miriam Webster Dictionary." *Miriam Webster Dictionary*. Miriam Webster Dictionary, Web. 27 Nov 2018. <<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/methodology>>.

and epistemological views, and can it be done by reframing a traditional medicine wheel to be more intersectionally inclusive?"

I will demonstrate how the new 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Research Paradigm can be used from Mi'kmaw perspectives on traditions, ethics, and research protocols through the meaning making of the story-acts (Price, Hartt, Cole & Barnes, 2019; Price, Hartt, Wall, Baker, Williams, 2019). The 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Research Paradigm tools will be developed to enable transferability between Indigenous Nations, providing researchers with a template for the development of research projects with any Indigenous Nation that is respectful of their protocols for engagement and cultural traditions, and intersectional identities. These tools will assist researchers wishing to use the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Research Paradigm to design, organize and implement the objectives of their research.

Chapter 2 will introduce the reader to the history that led me to picking up the talking stick with a combination of personal story-acts that I am retelling after having spent time in meaning making with the original stories. Combining the story-acts with a literature review on the various elements that have brought me to this place, poised with my talking stick, I present the backstory to the forthcoming plot. The plot of the story will present the methodologies that influenced, and were used, to develop the resolution to my story.

Chapter 3 is the methodology that was used for this project and expands upon how I conducted the research (story-acts), and the meaning making (analysis) for the development necessary for chapter 4. Chapter 4 is a summary of the important points that I was able to garner from the meaning making process based on a Two-Eyed Seeing approach while addressing the mind, body, spirit and emotion quadrants of the medicine wheel. Chapter 5 are the findings based on my interpretations and analysis as it is related to the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model.



I present you, the reader, with my story-act, the meaning making that came from the story-acts and the process for the collaborative development of a resolution to the conflicts presented by the ongoing systemic colonialization of research, and my role as a protagonist in helping to create a resolution toward the decolonization of research for future academics, consultants, and those who wish to work with Indigenous people in respectful, meaningful, and valuable ways that benefit all those involved in future projects.

## ***Chapter 2: Providing a Backstory (Literature Review)***

As this story takes place in Mi'kma'ki, I will begin at the beginning. Mi'kmaw Elder Murdena Marshall says, "I am from anywhere and everywhere. Eskasoni is the place I choose to live, but I am not from there... We say we are from Mi'kma'ki" (Ancestors Live Here, 2020). For more than 11,000 years our Mi'kmaw ancestors (Lnu'k) have called Mi'kma'ki home, using the river systems as our transportation conduits taking us from place to place where Mi'kmaq harvested plants, animals, and materials necessary for survival. Many of our stories and legends relate to various landmarks throughout Mi'kma'ki. The Creation of Kluskap features Cape Blomidon, a dramatic landscape of red cliffs and sands, the Minas Basin geo-fracture which exposed a lot of tool-making cultural materials, ocean tides, and islands that were formed during a fight between Kluskap and his twin brother Malsum. There are many versions of the Mi'kmaw Creation story; I pick up the talking stick to provide a shortened version of one of the stories I heard growing up.

*Kisu'lk (gee-soolg) is the Creator, the one who creates everything, and is sometimes called Kji Niskam (gee nis-gum), or the Great Spirit. Kisu'lk created Wsitqamu'k (oo-sit-gah-moo), the Earth, which includes Mi'kma'ki. Kisu'lk also created Naku'set (na-goo-set), the sun, to watch over Wsitqamu'k, and the Mi'kmaq people. Kisu'lk then created all the animals, birds and plants on the surface of Wsitqamu'k.*

*The Creator caused the bolt of lightning that formed the body of Kluskap out of the earth, another bolt of lightning crashed from above and gave life to Kluskap, but he could not move, only see and hear the world around him. His head faced direction that Naku'set rose from every day, and his feet pointed toward where Naku'set went down every night. Kluskap watched the world unfolding around him, he watched the animals, birds and plants as they grew and passed him by, but he still could not move, so he asked Kisu'lk to*

*allow him to move. Another bolt of lightning unfurled and caused Kluskap to free himself from the land and stand upon Wsitqamu'k. When Kluskap was free he stood up and gave thanks to the Creator for giving him life, he thanked Wsitqamu'k for giving him the material for his body Kisu'lk for giving him a soul, and then he thanked the four directions starting in the East: seven directions in all.*

*Kluskap traveled the earth, starting his journey by walking west, toward the setting sun, then to the south, then the south, then back to the east where his journey began, as his life had. He learned about the animals, trees and birds during his journeys but did not understand his purpose, so he asked the Creator what he was to do. Creator told him to be patient, that he was about to meet someone. That person appeared when Kluskap was walking in the East.*

*One day he came across a very old woman who said, "I am Nukumi (noo-goo-me), your grandmother". Grandmother explained that she had come from the earth as well; "I come from the rock, and the dew, and Naku'set. Nukumi was "born" wise and knowledgeable. She advised Kluskap that by listening to her that he would also become wise and knowledgeable. Kluskap called upon Apistne'wj (ah-bis-tin-nay-ooj), the martin, to give up his life so that he and his grandmother could live and the martin agreed. Feeling bad for Apisten'wj, Kluskap asked Creator to bring him back to life. Doing so, the Creator gave Apistne'wj his life and another martin was in his place. Kluskap considered Apistne'wj his brother, and because of his willingness to sacrifice himself for Kluskap and Nukumi, Kluskap called him brother. He believed that all animals were his brothers and sisters. Nukumi took the second martin and quickly broke its neck and cleaned it to eat it. Nukumi went to the place where Kluskap was created and gathered sparks from the earth where the lightning had struck and placed the sparks on dry wood to create a fire, the first fire, The Great Spirit Fire. They cooked their first meal over the Great Fire (Bird, 2018).*

I put the talking stick down now, although the story has just begun to reveal my meaning-making of the beginning of this tale. Through the miracle of creation Kluskap came to be born, then his grandmother Nukumi was born, and through the development of this relationship Kluskap came to know the animals and birds as his brothers and sisters; that is what I first thought about the story when I heard it as a child. As an adult I have listened to this tale many times and the meaning I find in the words and tones of the storytellers create more complex understandings of the relationship that Kluskap had with Kisu'lk, Nukumi, and Apistne'wj.

Kluskap had learned that through the knowledge and wisdom held by Nukumi held, that he was able to survive in the world by taking sustenance from the earth, plants, and animals. His relationship with Kisu'lk was one of gratefulness, respect and stewardship. The relationship with Apistne'wj was one of brotherhood and respect, which extended to the rest of the animal kingdom. As this is only the beginning of the story and it goes on much longer, introducing new characters, developing character traits and relationships to one another, and providing more insight into the creation of not only the Mi'kmaw world, but the Mi'kmaw belief system, philosophies, cultural and spiritual networks and values, giving insight into the gendered roles and relationships (or non-gendered ones, such as Kisu'lk), the meaning derived from one of the Mi'kmaw creation stories grows with each listening, and each retelling.

“We learn what we need to know at the time”, my grandmother told me once as a child, “and every time we listen to our storytellers, we learn something new” (Rose Knockwood-Morris, in conversation, circa 1984). This comment rang through my head like a bell going off when I was learning about non-corporeal actant (NCA) theory, which is not a part of this thesis, but was a path that I was taking when I discovered the “story-act” (Price et al. 2019). Price states, “Story-act includes all voices corporeal and non-corporeal with the tensions (nuances, intricacies and complexities) that are brought into

the conversation when the holistic social represents multiple competing Indigenous and non-Indigenous views of the social” (p.21). While reading this passage I considered the storytelling that has kept our Mi’kmaw oral histories alive today and the holistic philosophy of *Msiit No’kmaq*, which translates to “we are all related”, and our beliefs that our ancestors are with us today, wherever we go. The concept of non-corporeal actants, and the meaning that I took from the readings, that there was a theory out there that Mi’kmaw people would find accessible because it was inclusive of the spiritual and philosophical beliefs that we are all related -- the birds, animals, trees and humans are all related and the spiritual bonds that tie us together have a space in theoretical applications (Simpson, 2017. p.58).

*Meaning making* from a story-act is a method of understanding the story-act that includes the “complex interconnections of story, storyteller, and story audience” (Price et al. p. 21, 2019), and also includes the ethereal, spiritual interconnections that bind us together (Price et al., 2019, p.28). In *As We Have Always Done, Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (2017), Anishnaabeg scholar, researcher and professor, Leeann Betasamosake Simpson states, “Indigenous peoples have always been theoretical people. We’ve always thought in complex ways about the nature of our worlds. We’ve always sought out explanations and deeper meanings” (p.56). Meaning making connects the story-act with the “values, connections, relationships, lessons derived from lived stories and how they shape the lived experience...”, and every time we hear a story, and retell a story an opportunity to make new connections and understand new meanings is presented (Price et al., 2019, p.28).

Here, I pick up the talking stick again to retell a Mi’kmaw prophesy.

*Marie Battiste, Mi’kmaw scholar, author and Elder says in Nikaniknutmaq (used to teach first), the first chapter of the Mi’kmaq Concordat, “At the beginning of the cycle of Jenu (the Ice Age) during a great*

*famine, Nákúset, the spirit of the sun, came to an elder in a dream. The elder was approached by a young man carrying three crosses. He offered the old man the crosses, telling him that each cross had a role to play in the survival of the people and, if used properly, the people would benefit by them. One of the crosses would serve the people in times of conflict with nature and with others. Another would grant them safety on their long voyages and in new experiences. The last would serve them in the deliberations of councils and aid them in making decisions for future generations. When the elder awoke, he called the village council. The three crosses and their meaning were explained, and he drew the symbols of the vision. This knowledge was widely shared with other families and, as the instructions were followed, the famine lifted.*

*Under the vision of the three crosses, the people allied into a nation of crossbearers and adjusted to the hardships of the cold Jenu. They survived the enormous environmental changes by traveling to the south and west of their territory. As they traveled to Central America, they were enriched in their knowledge, language and culture by their travels and their meeting with other peoples...*

*Not all was known, however, about the deeper meanings of the prophecy of the crosses. Events across the Great Sea were to bring new understandings of the old man's vision. A Mikmaq woman dreamed of a small island floating toward the land of ws itqamúk. At first glance, the island appeared to be inhabited by people or animals wearing white rabbit skins; then it became an island of bare trees with black bears on its branches. The woman told her dream to the elders and vision people of the village, but the strange features of the dream could not be understood. The dreamer and the dream had startling roles to*

*play in the future—roles indiscernible at the time. As events unfolded, the meaning of these prophecies were understood.* (Henderson, 1997, pp. 16, 18-19)

Mi'kmaw storyteller, Cathy Martin said in a recent interview with the Cape Breton Post, “Glooscap (Kluskap)<sup>4</sup> ‘created a beautiful land for the Mi'kmaq where everything was provided’, but when the settlers came to Canada Kluskap saw them coming and said, ‘I can’t live with you anymore’. Since Kluskap’s departure the Mi'kmaq have been victims of the systemic colonization of their way of life, nearly brought to the brink of extinction. But Kluskap ‘said that when we need Glooscap (Kluskap) to return to help us we have to send seven young natives up to the top of the hill where he left from, and those seven young natives who are seven years old have to pray, and when they pray Glooscap will come and help the people’” (The Creation of Kluskap and the Mi'kmaq, 2020).

### ***2.1 Enter the Antagonists***

Settler colonialism began in Canada, reportedly in the 16<sup>th</sup> century by Europeans, and “Canadian scholarship has always been constructed on the integral foundation of Eurocentric thought and its context. The existing academic disciplines and their frameworks, theories, paradigms and contexts are constructed on Eurocentric diffusion, which informs the colonial legacy of Canada” (Henderson, 1997, p. 22). Colonialism and Imperialism are interconnected, with colonialism being just one derivative of imperialism. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Smith states that “Imperialism was a system of control which secured the markets and capital investments. Colonialism facilitated this expansion by ensuring that there was European control, which necessarily meant securing and

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<sup>4</sup> Mi'kmaw language has many different dialects and ways of spelling the written text due to the centralization of Mi'kmaw communities onto reserves that span from Nova Scotia to Quebec, and down to Southern Maine. Glooscap is a common spelling of Kluskap. Some translations are directly quoted and I will put alternate spellings in parenthesis when there are discrepancies.

subjugating the indigenous populations” (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012, Chapter 1, Section 2, location 641). Where imperialism is conceptual, colonization is actionable, and the actions that colonizers took were based in a notion of positional superiority, making Indigenous traditional knowledge a commodity for discovery, extraction, and commodification like the land-based resources (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012). As settler colonials discovered new knowledge about the new world they produced, the Papal Bull of Demarcation of 1493 validated the distinctions between the East and West, drawing a line between the settlers and Others (Indigenous peoples). Indigenous people were classified with the flora and fauna demoting the Indigenous inhabitants of the land as non-humans, or sub-human (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2012; Henderson, 1997).

As collectors of knowledge and intellectual property the settler colonials controlled the collections of knowledge through museums, libraries, and private collections. Access to these collections was granted to European scholars, but colonialism had taken liberties with the knowledge. Smith states, “It is important to remember, however, that colonialism was not just about collection. It was also about re-arrangement, re-presentation and re-distribution” (Tuhiwai-Smith. 2012. Kindle iOS edition. Location 1446). The more formal the collections were the more authoritative they became, and once institutionalized into academia the control of information and the methods in which it was gathered was imperialized and controlled by the settlers. Tuhiwai-Smith states,

*“The ‘fatal impact’ of the West on indigenous societies generally has been theorized as a phased progression through: (1) initial discovery and contact, (2) population decline, (3) acculturation, (4) assimilation, (5) ‘reinvention’ as a hybrid, ethnic culture. While the terms may differ across various theoretical paradigms the historical descent into a state of nothingness and hopelessness has tended to persist. Indigenous perspectives also show a phased progression, more likely to be articulated as: (1) contact and invasion, (2)*



*genocide and destruction, (3) resistance and survival (4) recovery as indigenous peoples” (locations 1958-1963).*

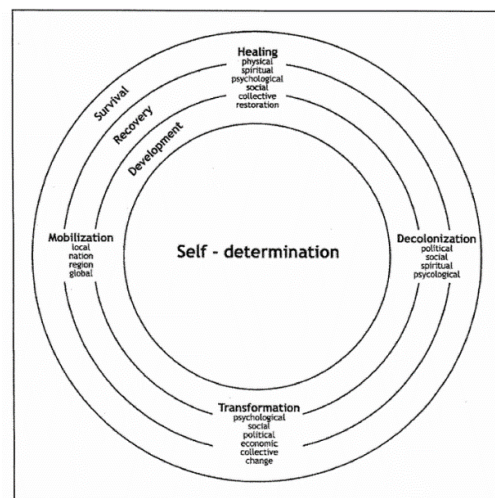
## 2.2 The Protagonists Take a Stand

In a decolonizing effort to assert some ownership over the ways their own ITK is produced, used, and controlled, the Maori developed the Indigenous Research Agenda (Figure 1) in the late 1960's that addressed healing, decolonization, transformation, and mobilization to reach self-determination (Tuhiwai-Smith. 1999, ). In *Research is Ceremony (2008)*, Wilson describes the Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP) shared by Indigenous researchers and scholars in Canada and Australia that includes four elements:

- Epistemology (the nature of knowledge and how we come about knowing),
- Axiology (what is valuable to research?),
- Ontology (what is real?), and
- Methodology (how we gain knowledge) (p.108).

Wilson provided a Two-Eyed Seeing approach to relaying Indigenous Methodology in *Research is Ceremony (2008)*, using storytelling as a method of translation and meaning making to the reader and provided contextualized examples of the Indigenous Research Paradigm's elements. As Wilson explains,

“...the book is typeset in two different fonts: the main font denotes a more “academic” style; a different font is used for the personal narrative sections, which are initially addressed to my sons...I felt that the dominant style of writing to an anonymous



*Figure 1 Indigenous Research*

*Agenda (Smith, 1999. P 117).*

reader did not live up to the standards of relational accountability I was proposing.

Indigenous epistemology is all about ideas developing through the formation of relationships. An idea cannot be taken out of this relational context and still maintain its shape.” (p.8)

Through “conversations with his sons” recounted in the book, he emphasized that the sharing of knowledge, storytelling and listening, are ceremonial, and therefore the relationship that is built with the storyteller and listener is a part of the interaction. Martin states that the “social construction of knowledge within which Two-Eyed Seeing is imbued recognizes that we are social beings and in order for knowledge to be produced anew ‘we all need one another’”(Martin, 2012). In Two-Eyed Seeing there is a need to build relationships, as in Indigenous Methodology (Wilson, 2008). However, there isn’t a place on the paradigm that shows researchers how to build these relationships.

While discussing the intersection of gender roles and the binary established through colonialism as well as the non-binary gender roles that the Nishnaabeg peoples embraced, Simson (2017) states that “individuals engaged in each of these activities [“traditional” male and female roles of hunting and gathering] depended on their clan, their extended family, their skill and interest, and most importantly individual self-determination or agency. Agency was valued, honored, and respected because it produced a diversity of highly self-sufficient individuals, families and communities” (pp.128-129). I am embracing this sense of agency in my approach to the research that is being taken for this thesis.

I divert from the Indigenous Research Paradigm as explained by Wilson (2008) where he describes the Indigenous Research Paradigm’s four elements as *shared* epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology of North American and Australian Indigenous peoples (p. 12). Instead, I expand on the four-element Indigenous Research Paradigm to address the additional elements that restore each Indigenous Nation or

community's uniqueness, building upon the IRP's generic categories, application and usage by taking a community-specific approach that is respectful of intersectional needs and protocols for research, transfer of knowledge, cultural beliefs, and conventions for engagement. When using the IRP, the term *painting them all with the same brush* comes to mind, by removing the intersections of individual tribal, cultural, and traditional and/or modern identities of unique Indigenous Nations and communities across the continents. I contend that this is still a colonized approach to Indigenous research as it disregards the identities of individual Indigenous Nations' cultures, traditions, beliefs, and protocols for engagement. I propose that adding what I determine are missing steps, that it will further decolonize Indigenous research and develop longer lasting, reconciliatory relationships.

In the *Mi'kmaq Concordat* (1997), Henderson states, "...the Mi'kmaq were not impressed with European society as represented by the priests and settlers. The priests wrote that the Mi'kmaq glorified in their own society and culture" (p.94). The Mi'kmaq were so insistent on their worldview being central to their identity that, "the priests resigned themselves to operating within the Mi'kmaq order and to slowly building upon the limited idea of authority within the traditional order" (p.96). It is this worldview and insistence that we adhere to it as Mi'kmaq that was conveyed to me as a child listening to the oral histories through the story-acts of my Elders. We are Lnu'k (native peoples) of Mi'kma'ki, and we don't change our worldview to adhere to outsiders' perspectives or dominance. This ingrained belief led me to the understanding that when working with the Indigenous Research Paradigm, that our worldview must be respected, and our unique cultural and traditional beliefs must be a part of any research process.

Western research frameworks would deem the unique approaches to Indigenous research, the spiritual connection to the data that they collect and the ways that Indigenous people interpret knowledge are biased and are therefore devalued within the academy (Martin, 2012; Hamilton, 2018; Kovach, 2009). As Kovach states, "Edward

Buendia contends that conceptual systems traditionally utilized in Western higher education are culturally and racially loaded mechanisms that privilege European epistemological thought” (2009. p.41). This paternalistic colonized approach to the control of knowledge has historically impacted Indigenous people around the world (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015).

In *Indigenous Methodologies* (2009), Kovach explains that Western frameworks can be adapted structurally to allow Indigenous researchers the make space for Indigenous spirituality, symbolism, metaphors, and can be more conceptually inclusive, to allow for a more holistic approach to Indigenous research. However, I will demonstrate that the holistic approach to Indigenous research that comes from an Indigenous concept of balance, wholism, the Anishnaabe medicine wheel as a framework, specifically the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel that I have adapted for this thesis, further decolonizes the Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP) as it respects the unique traditional and cultural beliefs of individual Indigenous Nations and communities. As the IRP was developed upon the foundation of the Indigenous Research Agenda (IRA), I will further develop the IRP to be inclusive of diversity and individual cultural, social, traditional and contemporary epistemologies and axiologies with a new paradigm that addresses intersectional Indigenous identities by bringing non-Indigenous scholars into our Indigenous ontological worldviews; a 7-Direction Indigenous Research Paradigm that will hold a significant value to Indigenous peoples that are engaging with researchers and to the Academy as well.

As Dr. Kim Tallbear states in her talk at the *Decolonizing Science and Technology Conference* (Feb 5, 2019):

*I was at the American Society for Human Genetics back in 2010...Rod McGinnis gave a really important talk that year where he basically said that geneticists need to come into the, he called it the metaphorical tent of Indigenous*

*people. But I call it the ontological tent; that they need to come and inhabit our worldview.*

Contributions to ongoing research in this field for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars will include strategic planning tools for Indigenous communities and researchers to use, that will help strategize engagement in research that is respectful of those communities' epistemological, axiological, ontological and methodological histories, cultures and traditions by expanding on the methods for engaging in respectful dialogues that will inform these relationships. While the IRP includes the necessary elements to the development of an approach to research with Indigenous peoples, it lacks the elements necessary for culturally specific protocols for engagement with communities and organizations and removes the uniqueness that each Indigenous community has through the erasure of individual cultural norms, mores, and taboos.

*I was sitting by the Sacred Fire with my Great Uncle Noel; my grandmother's brother who was a residential school survivor, medicine man and healer, and scholar. He was getting up there in years by this time and while his short-term memory wasn't as sharp as it used to be he was still very in touch with his long-term memories. I was in my bachelor's program at Saint Mary's University at the time, so he asked me how school was going. I told him that I was doing my degree in sociology, and he said "hmmm, that's a good field. Have you thought about anthropology?".*

*I said, "I'm taking a couple of courses in anthropology and my favourite was actually a course I took at Dalhousie University called social anthropology".*

*He warned me, "watch out for researchers who say one thing and do another. Our knowledge is valuable to them and they will do whatever they can to learn what we know but won't give us credit for it".*

*It was my first experience with cultural appropriation from a research perspective and I didn't necessarily understand what he meant exactly so I asked him to explain.*

*He said, "When you took your social anthropology course what kind of researchers were providing the information for the texts? Were they from that cultural, social group? Or were they outsiders? Where does the money for the textbooks go when you have to buy them? Do the people that they studied get anything in return for the information that they shared? Do they have any say in how they wanted the researchers to engage with them or were they just observed and written about?" (Conversation with Mi'kmaw Elder Noel Knockwood, 2005)*

Research has been biased in a western academic setting through the hegemonic control of the dissemination and restricted access of data to elite academics, governments, and authoritarian regimes looking to control Indigenous populations, growth, longevity, and enforce enfranchisement through residential schools which served to erase Indigenous identities in exchange for a higher education into the westernized society that was built on the bones of my Mi'kmaw ancestors (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2005; Battiste, 2017; Knockwood. (n.d.); Thomas, 1992). Research has appropriated pieces of ITK and called them scientific discoveries (Martin, 2012). While Indigenous researchers have previously engaged in decolonizing research through the development of the IRA and the IRP, I contend that these paradigms can be further decolonized through the creation and implementation of a new 7-Direction Research Paradigm that addresses the uniqueness of individual Indigenous communities through the additional elements that will undo the erasure that colonialism has imbued upon research methodologies.

As the Maori began addressing the effects of colonization through social movements, protests over land rights, language and cultural rights, human rights and civil rights it became an international movement of Indigenous peoples across the globe

(Smith, 2012). The momentum for decolonized research and academic studies has continued to grow and push its way through the dominant Western hegemonies aspiring to “recover, re-cognize, re-create, re-present, and “re-search back by using our own ontological and epistemological constructs” (Archibald, et al., 2019. p.6). Decolonizing research methodologies does not mean that Western research frameworks are dismissed. As Smith states in the foreword to “Decolonizing research: Indigenous storywork as methodology” (2019, p.6), Indigenous researchers connect research to our own worldviews and then theorize based on our own cultural ontologies, identifying what is useful for our people.

*I grew up in the United States, away from my Mi'kmaw community. I am half Irish, but identify as a Mi'kmaw woman, that is white-passing. This created(s) conflicting emotions when I moved to Canada and had a hard time finding where I fit into the culture and community. I always felt like the outsider looking in at something that was unobtainable. The Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre helped to reconcile that conflict and when asked now I say, “kwe, nin teluisi Tammy Williams, aq tlewayi Kjupuktuk”, Hi, my name is Tammy Williams and I am from Kjipuktuk (Halifax).*

This dual-identity caused many internal conflicts until I was offered an opportunity to attend a workshop on something called Two-Eyed Seeing, by Albert and Murdena Marshall, in Eskasoni, Nova Scotia. While listening to the Elders speaking about the Two-Eyed Seeing method of approaching research, being respectful of both western and Mi'kmaw worldviews, research methods, and protocols, I had an epiphany that this was the breakthrough that I had been waiting for; a way to bring both of my identities together when it came to work, school, and research.

### 2.3 *Two-Eyed Seeing*

There is a dominance of positivism in the Western academic setting, a hegemonic power that has contributed to the ongoing colonization of Canada's Indigenous peoples (Martin. 2012). Residential schools were created with very limited educational goals for the children, reflecting "a low regard for the intellectual capacities of Aboriginal people" (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. 2015. p.7). As such, there is an erasure of history regarding Indigenous peoples across Canada, perpetuating the ignorance of and lack of respect for Indigenous experiences, knowledge, and perspectives (Martin. 2012). When addressing positivist paradigms of research, anything that falls outside of scientific research, or reasoning, is disregarded as inconclusive and ideological. This history of Western dominance in academia has also created an environment of *we know best*, or *you know less*, even though many of today's pharmaceuticals come from Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK) (Simpson, 2001). Decolonizing research requires that positivist, empirical, scientific, and qualitative research is viewed through an Indigenous lens and ask how, why, and who is asking the research questions. It is not a dismissal of Western research paradigms, but a means in which Indigenous researchers can connect to their research through their own worldview (Archibald, et al., 2019. p.6). A Two-Eyed Seeing methodology is inclusive of both Western and Indigenous worldviews, seeing the best of both worlds through each eye, and bringing them together.

As quoted by Debbie Martin, "Two-Eyed Seeing adamantly, respectfully, and passionately asks that we bring together our different ways of knowing to motivate people, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, to use all our understandings so that we can leave the world a better place and not compromise the opportunities for our youth (in the sense of Seven Generations) through our own inaction" (2012, p.21). Ancient knowledge is being used to identify medicines that were created prior to contact with non-Indigenous



settler-colonials. These medicines helped Indigenous peoples live and stay alive for over 13,000 years (Bartlett, et al., 2017; The Nova Scotia Archives. 2020).

By using only one approach to research with, or on, Indigenous peoples there has been a gap in understanding the ways in which Indigenous peoples understand, interact, and historically connect with the world around them. A Two-Eyed Seeing approach will include the Indigenous ways of being, knowing, and doing into future projects between Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners. Two-Eyed Seeing is the ability to draw on the strengths of both worlds, the Indigenous and the Western worlds, and then use both eyes together (Bartlett et al., 2012).

*“That’s not Mi’kmaq”, she said. I looked at my grandmother with a questioning glance and asked her, “why do we use it then?” Her response reverberates through me even to this day, “We were the first contact that settlers had, we have been exposed to colonialism for longer than any other Indigenous group in Canada, and therefore we have lost the most of who we were. So, we borrowed from other native people”. (Grandmother’s teachings, Rose Knockwood-Morris, circa 1995)*

In a conversation with Mi’kmaw Elder and educator Jane Meader in 2016, I learned of another prophesy that foretold the loss of our identity and the reclamation that we would have to go through to regain the lost ceremonies, songs, and knowledge. This prophesy was retold to me once again by Elder and author of *We Were Not the Savages*, Danny Paul during a conversation in 2016.

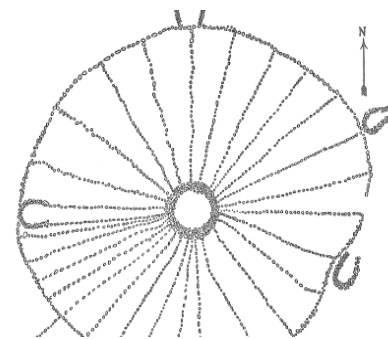
*There was a prophesy that went like this, “After the Europeans arrived, but hadn’t completely overtaken Mi’kma’ki yet, a woman had a dream that a ship would arrive with many more settlers and when that happened, we would lose who we were. So, the woman and the Elders “packaged” up our stories, songs, ceremonies, wampum, and other things that would remind us of who we once were and brought*

*them to the Anishnaabeg and Mohawk peoples for safekeeping. The old woman said that when we reached a point in our existence where we forgot who we are that it would be the grandmothers who would travel to the other territories and re-learn the old ways and bring them back to us.” (Elders Jane Meader and Danny Paul in separate conversations, 2016)*

I honestly can't remember what it was that we were referring to, but I think it was a dreamcatcher that I was making at the time. The knowledge that we were first contact and lost the most seeped into my soul that day. We could be talking about regalia, songs, dances, artefacts, but the fact remains that we lost a lot of who we were when settlers came to Canada. Because of this I have formatted this thesis based on the borrowed tools, resources and knowledge of other Indigenous peoples while acknowledging that our knowledge is slowly being restored by our Elders who travel to other territories to re-learn the ceremonies, songs, and traditions that were lost.

#### ***2.4 The Medicine Wheel***

The Medicine Wheel as is a cyclical, holistic tool used by Indigenous people across North America. The original Medicine Wheels that were identified by Western researchers were thought to be the stone foundations of spiritual, ceremonial lodges. The Medicine Wheel located at the top of Medicine Mountain, in the Big Horn Mountains in Wyoming (Grinnell, 1922) (See Figure 3). Among the Crow people, there were associations between the stone circles and the Little People, a species of trickster spirits that seem to exist in many, if not most Indigenous Nations in North America. The Anishnaabe (Ojibwe) use of the Medicine Wheel as a framework for world view includes



***Figure 3 - : Plan of Medicine Wheel. Drawn by Thos. M. Galey (Grinnell, 1922)***

***Figure 4 - : Plan of Medicine Wheel. Drawn by Thos. M. Galey (Grinnell, 1922)***

the belief that everything in the world has a place on the wheel and are a part of the whole. It is also used to help encourage critical thinking and discussion with organization tools that can be adapted for variety of purposes (Silliby-Smith, 2014).

The Medicine Wheel is not Mi'kmaq in origin; the Mi'kmaq did not use this as a

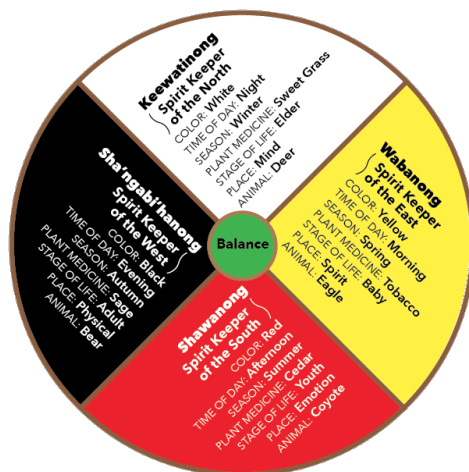


Figure 5 – Ojibwe Medicine Wheel.

[WWW.KBICHEALTH.ORG/OJIBWE-MEDICINE](http://WWW.KBICHEALTH.ORG/OJIBWE-MEDICINE)

a balanced *self* that addresses the four main aspects of mind, body, spirit and emotion (Graveline, 2009; Walker, 2001). There are other models of medicine wheels from Indigenous Nations throughout North America, some having more than the four directions, but always including the holistic flow between each of the areas. This flow between the quadrants and sections of medicine wheels show how one area can affect the others; for example, improving ones' physical health can have positive impacts on their spiritual, emotional and mental wellness.

The Anishnaabeg 7-Direction medicine wheel includes the four directions, plus the sky, the ground, and the self at the centre (see figure 4). The 7-Direction medicine wheel includes the four cardinal points; the four directions represented by the colours yellow, red, black and white. The

tool historically. However, in more recent years the Medicine Wheel has been interpreted and shared internationally between Indigenous Nations as a holistic tool to use in healing practices that encompass all aspects of life: mind, body, spirit, and emotion (Wilson. 2003), (see Figure 3). The Medicine Wheel is a holistic approach for creating

a balanced *self* that addresses the four main aspects of mind, body, spirit and emotion (Graveline, 2009; Walker, 2001). There are

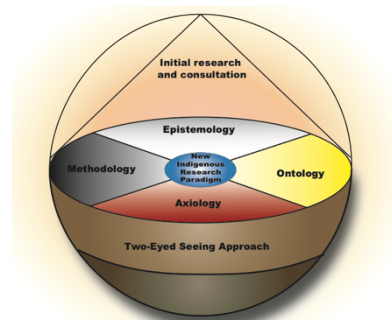


Figure 7 Anishnaabeg 7-Direction Medicine Wheel adapted for this project

orange represents the sky, and the brown represents the Mother Earth, and the blue at the centre represents the self as it journeys through the physical world. The medicine wheel also includes the seven stages of life, from east to west: The Good Life; The Fast Life; The Wandering Life; the stages of Truth, Planning and Doing; and the Elder Life. Also represented on the medicine wheel are the Seven Sacred Teachings: honesty, humility, courage, wisdom, respect, generosity, and love. As described by Elder, Lillian Pitawanakwat, “The...Medicine Wheel remind us of many things, such as the need for balance in the world, and the balance we must strive for everyday within ourselves (Pitawanakwat, 2012).

The colonization of the academy and its subsequent treatment of Indigenous peoples through education, research, and systemic racism has oppressed holistic and cyclical Indigenous paradigms historically (Walker, 2001). I anticipate some resistance to the use of this tool by academia because the nature of the Medicine Wheel is introspective, it is subjective, and it is not what some Western researchers who ascribe to dominant academic hegemonies would consider objective in nature. But it’s also holistic and allows the researcher to engage in their studies from an immersive perspective.

I pick up the talking stick.

*When I was a teenager about to graduate high school and applying to colleges and universities, I was concentrating my locations for post-secondary schooling in Canada. My mother sat me down one day and said I want to talk to you. I thought, ‘oh no, what did I do, am I in trouble?’ After seeing the look on her face, I noticed that it wasn’t anger or disappointment that I saw but a concern that I hadn’t ever seen before. It was a look of sadness, a look of hope, and a look of caution.*

*Mom said, “If you go to Canada to live and go to school you have an opportunity to make a choice. A choice that I didn’t have growing up.”*

*Frowning, I looked over at my mother and before I could ask her to explain or to go on, she said, “Canada has more racism toward Native people than they do in the States. Down here everyone thinks we’re extinct, but up in Canada they know we are still around and they treat us like they treat Black people down here in the States.” I was shocked and dismayed that this was a reality that still existed.*

*I asked her what she wanted to say to me, and she went on, “you have the ability to pass as a white person. You don’t have to tell people that you’re Mi’kmaq and they will treat you better if you don’t.”*

*“I am Mi’kmaq. I am Lnu’k. I might look the way that I do, but I am who I am. You raised me to be Mi’kmaq. You raised me to be a strong Mi’kmaw woman. How can I deny that part of who I am? I want to know more, I want to learn more, I want to participate in ceremonies, I want to be who I was always meant to be but couldn’t because we live here and not where our people are.”*

### ***2.5 Revitalization of Cultural and Traditional Ways of Being***

Indigenous spirituality was historically viewed as a form of resistance to the Colonial settlers and researchers. The attempted genocide of Indigenous people directly attacked the spirituality of Indigenous peoples. Christianity attempted to destroy, appropriate, and then claim for themselves the spirituality of the Indigenous peoples (Smith. 2009).

Anishnaabeg scholar, researcher and professor, Leanne Simpson’s works encourage inclusivity in the development of research models, and this inclusivity should occur even before research models are developed. This type of forward-thinking approach to the creation of research frameworks by initializing contact using Indigenous Nations’ specific ways of engagement based in traditional and cultural beliefs is reminiscent of Joseph Kalt’s and Stephen Cornell’s work with the Harvard Institute on Nation-Building, encouraging consultation with Indigenous stakeholders to develop community buy-in and

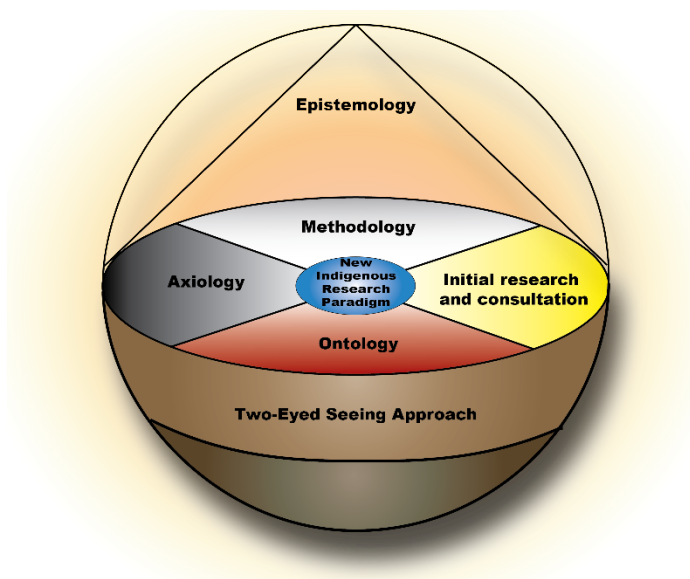
engagement (Cornell & Kalt,1998). This sense of inclusion and approach to community (Mi'kmaq and Indigenous) buy-in will help avoid the conflicts that will arise as people engage in decolonizing practices.

More recent decolonizing efforts through the reclamation of sovereignty and self-identity among Indigenous people, especially in regard to research being conducted on them and their communities, has developed into Indigenous-guided methods and methodologies such as the Indigenous Agenda, another model that is based on the circle, with self-determination as the centered, balanced *self* (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999) (see Figure 1). The 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Research Paradigm (Figure 4) embraces the Maori's holistic approach to research, while providing tools for its further development, adaptation, and use.

### ***Chapter 3 - Ta'l tla'tikn or tal kis tela't~la'tsnuk (Methodology)***

The purpose of my research is to gather the stories from Indigenous knowledge holders to co-create the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Paradigm Model.

The following methodology section illustrates how I implemented my activities in the co-creation of the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Paradigm Model, which addresses the missing elements to individual, intersectional, culture-specific approaches to engaging with Indigenous peoples in research.



***Figure 8-Proposed 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Paradigm Model***

#### ***3.1 Data Gathering***

Research for this thesis was conducted through a series of interviews, which I refer to as conversational storytelling opportunities to engage with an intersectional selection of participants from the Kjiptuk (Halifax) urban-Indigenous community's knowledge holders. I chose to use a semi-structured interview guide with two grand tour questions (McCracken, 1988).

1. I fully shared with the participants my 7-direction medicine wheel and then ask them to share stories that may guide adaptations to the model

that are specific to the way they identify themselves within their Indigenous worldviews, and their previous experience with research projects as partners, participants, and designers.

2. Rather than gather demographics from participants, I asked them to share with me a story of their identity connections. The purpose of this question is to respect their intersectionalities as “[s]tories remind us of who we are and of our belonging. Stories hold within them knowledges while simultaneously signifying relationships. In oral traditions, stories can never be decontextualized from the teller. They are active agents within a relational world, pivotal in gaining insight into a phenomenon” (Kovach, 2010, p. 94).

In aiming to learn about how researchers can engage using culturally and intersectionally<sup>5</sup> respectful protocols I sought to expand upon the currently used Indigenous Research Paradigm to further decolonize the process of engagement. While Covid-19 prevented in-person interviews, I engaged with storytellers (who also had previous experience with other research projects) in virtual storytelling sessions on Zoom. This involved recognizing their stories are culturally embedded within their individual Indigenous knowledge systems, which include values, beliefs, practices, adaptations, and transmissions (Giles, Fanning, Denny, and et al., 2019), all the while being understood through my own heart, mind, body, and spirit (Archibald,

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<sup>5</sup> In the urban Indigenous community of K’jipuktuk, and the Mi’kmaw Native Friendship Centre, where I am anticipating many of the participants will be recruited from, there are multiple intersectional identities and Indigenous nations throughout the community. Engaging with them in an intersectionally respectful way would include respecting their multitude of gender, sexuality, fluidity, and race identities that are a part of the K’jipuktuk community.



2008) as a part of my own healing and decolonizing journey (Waziyatawin & Yellow Bird, 2012). According to Cajete (2016, pg. 368), “[t]he story of the community becomes a living and animate entity that is vitalized when it is nourished properly through the special attention given it by its tellers and those that listen to it. And, when a story finds that special circumstance or special person through which its message is fully received, it induces a direct and powerful understanding” (Cajete, 2016, p. 368). Living as a mixed-race Mi’kmaw woman (Crenshaw, 1989) and as a researcher engaging with urban Indigenous Knowledge Holders, the evolution of my own personal identity development is ever-changing as I continue to decolonize my mind, body, heart and spirit.

### ***3.2 Participant Recruitment***

Participants were recruited beginning with the Mi’kmaw Native Friendship Centre representing the cultural gathering place within Kijipuktuk and where there are multiple Indigenous nations coming from many intersectional backgrounds. In initial conversations with my mentors and Elders, I was provided with guidance on how to approach this research and with several individuals with whom to speak with. This purposive approach in the recruitment of urban-Indigenous storytellers, academics, language instructors, and individuals who have engaged in research provided a rich tapestry of perspectives,

However, it is important to note that, the covid-19 pandemic had serious impacts on not only my research, but also my own psyche. I had become lost in the panic of the April-July 2020, bleach-everything-in-sight-while-washing-your-hands-raw era while being concerned about our Mi’kmaw protocols for engagement. I had originally hoped to gain story-acts from at least 20 Indigenous participants from various intersectional backgrounds, however due to the pandemic restrictions this was not possible. After a conversation with my Elder Supervisor, Debbie Eisen and receiving guidance on how to proceed, I was able to finally move forward with my research proposal making adjustments to my own engagement protocols and limiting the number to five (5) to eight (8) participants. Taking the advice of my Elder I followed the normal protocols for

engaging with potential participants based on Mi'kmaw traditional roles and respect for Knowledge Holders. Although I could not meet with them in person as I would have liked I could engage with meaningfully, respectfully, and in a traditional, yet in a contemporary, format. For this reason, the number of participants were limited to 5 and were carefully chosen based on their experience, wisdom and knowledge.

The initial contact was made by phone, email, or social media messaging, participants were notified about how the data would be stored and with their consent, all interviews were all conducted and recorded by zoom for health and safety reasons.

### **3.3 Research Ethics**

I am picking up the talking stick to relay my ethics process.

*I applied for Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch at Cape Breton University for my research proposal and after many weeks of waiting, during the covid-shutdowns, I received an email with a couple of questions it to clarify a couple of points. I responded and the next day my approval came through. I also applied to the Kjipuktuk Eskinuapimk Empisqa'wik (Kjipuktuk Ethics Circle -KEE), at the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre and after a few weeks received my approval letter. Two different ethics boards, with Mi'kmaw culture at their cores to guide the ethical determinants were, to me, the approval that I needed the most as a Mi'kmaw researcher working with Mi'kmaw community members. So, I downloaded Form 1C -Approved Elsewhere, from the SMU ethics website, and filled it in, attaching my response letters. This form states that it is for students requesting approval based on another institution's ethics board approval.*

*The application was rejected. I was told that it wasn't enough information for them to work with. They wanted Form 1-Application for Ethics Review of Research Involving Humans; the form that anyone who applies for research fills out if they didn't get previous approval. I felt so invalidated at that point. I felt like the institution was practicing systemic racism by denying the previous approvals that I received from two Indigenous institutions. After crying and speaking to my supervisors, I attempted to fill in their Form-1.*

*After many iterations and versions of Form-1, and so much assistance from my co-supervisors as they mentored and supported me through this process, it was submitted to Saint Mary's University's Research Ethics Board (SMUREB). In my original proposal I wanted to offer my storytellers co-authorship of both the thesis document and resulting tool as a way for disseminating the thesis to Mi'kmaw communities for their use, if and when researchers use this new model as a guide for their research within our Indigenous communities. I wanted to abide by my cultural protocols and responsibilities, and give back to community, share the knowledge, embrace my humility and acknowledge that I did not do this alone, but that I had guidance and advice that lent itself to the development of this document.*

*I also wanted to make tobacco offerings to my participants, but during the Covid-19 pandemic's isolation and social distancing measures this was proving difficult to figure out how I could make happen. Tobacco offerings to our knowledge keepers are a form of appreciation to that person for sharing their time.*

*After a long period of time, I received my response from the ethics board.*

*The co-authorship was viewed as a form of coercion and frowned upon, and they stated, "The gift of tobacco, while culturally appropriate, is also recognized as a harmful substance and poses a risk...". Another comment stated, "Given your intent to recruit across diverse communities – is tobacco universally accepted as an appropriate means of compensation across First Nations communities? Should other forms of compensation be considered" (Email response to Form 1 application to SMUREB, January 21, 2021)?*

*I viewed this as the university's attempt to silence my ability to embrace my cultural identity. I admit that I took this to heart. This process of adhering to institutional protocols while also respecting my Mi'kmaw cultural protocols, was an emotional dichotomy of trans-cultural perspectives, wondering which eye or lens to view each new development. After taking 24 hours to reflect upon the issue, I asked myself 'what is the best approach for handling this', I made a choice. I dropped the co-authorship and decided that I could fight for the tobacco offerings more*

*successfully and at this stage, I had to get this approved so I could begin gathering my stories as I was running out of time.*

*I engaged with my Elder Supervisor, Debbie Eisen, who provided me with a tobacco teaching that I could share. I also downloaded another university's protocols on tobacco offerings with Indigenous knowledge keepers, and then I found the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2018), and quoted Article 9.15 which states, “In many First Nations, this involves the presentation and acceptance of tobacco to symbolize entering into a relationship. In some communities, feasting or gift-giving is appropriate” (Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans – TCPS 2 (2018) – Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada. 2018). This Tri-Council Policy is the document that all ethics boards are supposed to adhere to.*

*I chose my battles and felt victorious when SMUREB replied a day later, to my responses to their 18 points of issues with my application, with an approval. I pumped my fists in the air and cheered when I read the email and walked on the air for an hour before I calmed down enough to think, “it's time to action this!”*

*Though I felt I had won, I also felt that I was wounded in the battle. Western Academia-based ethics processes have a long way to go when it comes to reconciliation, decolonization and indigenization.*

### **3.4 Methodology and analytical method**

Throughout my lived experiences as a Mi'kmaw woman, I have remained embedded in my Mi'kmaw community(ies) by staying in close contact with my relations throughout Mi'kma'ki, living and working in Kjiptuk for many years and being an active member of the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre's community—all through which, have had the privilege of hearing the stories of my ancestors. I am a continuous learner of my Mi'kmaw ways of being. I am deeply reflexive and have spent a great deal of time in contemplation of the medicine wheel teachings, story bundles, and my embeddedness within the complexity of colonial relations. My

7-directions medicine wheel has emerged from my reflexivity and contemplation of what I have already learned by living within my community.

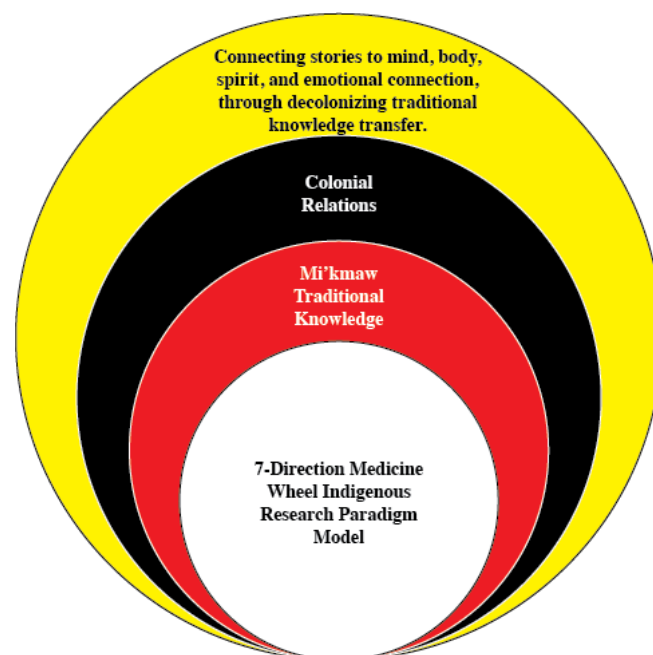
The purpose of my research was to adapt and co-create my 7-directions model for the Kjipuktuk, and larger Mi'kmaq community based on the interviews with participants.

The storytelling opportunities with knowledge holders are an opportunity to co-create meaning through the dynamic interactions within a storytelling event—story-act (see Figure 6, and Appendix 2).

Story-act (Price, et al., 2019) is a methodological approach that centres story as Indigenous methodology (Archibald, 2008;

Kovach, 2010; Wilson, 2008) while bridging with a Western theory called non-corporeal actant theory (NCA) (Hartt, 2013, 2019). I employed this blended approach as a way for engaging with Two-Eyed Seeing (Iwama, et al., 2009) to help me better understand the relationships between interconnected stories, storytellers, story audiences, and the past, present and future collection of agencies in Kjipuktuk. Story-act encompasses the

essences of who the storyteller and listener are, inclusive of the interconnected ways which Indigenous and non-Indigenous people exist within the world around them, respective of their social, political, and natural relationships.

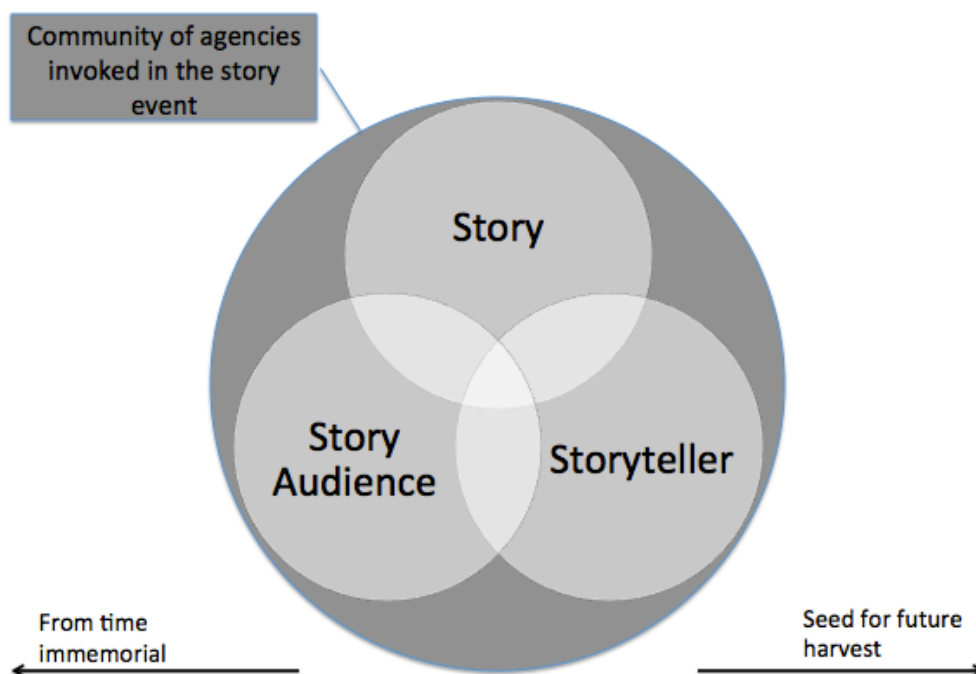


*Figure 9- Meaning Making approach to the complex nature of story-act, and the interconnected means of making meaning through relationships between the spiritual, political, traditional, and contemporary ontologies of Kjipuktuk's urban-Indigenous community. (Adapted from Price, 2020, in press)*

Story-acts are a collection of agencies, including the storyteller, the audience, and the story itself (Price. Et. al., 2019). Story-acts are personal; they are influenced by the storytellers' history and the histories of those who told them the stories. They are told and understood from inter-generational experiences and responsibilities to keep the story alive through re-listening and meaning making, re-interpreting, and re-telling. Oral histories are inter-generational authorships of collective experiences, wisdom, education, and ceremony, and as the story is told, heard, and retold, the story invokes the following generations' perceptions, understandings, knowledge, and experiences; growing roots in the traditional, while branching out to the contemporary (Simpson, 2017). Stories are relational and complexly co-created through intergenerational wisdoms. Whereas the story, storyteller, and story audience are interconnected in the story experience, the story listener is equally important in the co-production of the meaning potential of the story. Each story-act has meaning making potential and the more culturally embedded the story audience is, the more culturally appropriate the interpretation of the stories. Story-acts include a lifetime of wisdom, experience and lessons, and each individual story-act is influenced by the intergenerational retellings that it undergoes, and it "plants a seed for future harvest and meaning making potential" (Price, email correspondence. April 23, 2021) Please see Figure 10. When a collection of stories is interconnected through similar threads of subjects, or topics, they become a story-net (Price, S. 2020. p.64-65). The collection of stories that was gathered for the purpose of this learning opportunity (thesis), has become a story-net with a common thread of experiences with research projects and academia.

As I listened to the story-act participants during our initial conversations, I was aware that their stories held layer upon layer of knowledge. Some of the knowledge contained in the stories was relevant to the research questions that I had, but they also layered in ceremonial knowledge, traditional teachings, and topics that brought me to question whether they should be protected. When faced with these threads of knowledge that were ambiguous, I asked the storyteller whether it was ok with them to share in my paper, or if they should be left out. There

were times when the storyteller themselves would ask that I not quote them or share certain parts of the conversations, and if the thread of the conversation was about specific ceremonial knowledge, I held that information back, filtering the story-acts for the quotes that were pertinent to the topic and various areas of the adapted, decolonized model that I was developing.



*Figure 10-From (Price, et al., 2019, p. 22) Meaning making through the story-acts approach.*

Addressing the story-act from an urban-Indigenous ontology, I interpret story-acts through meaning making. To interpret the experiences, and the ontological worldview that the stories convey, I undertook the role as researcher-in-relation, using my own cultural and traditional Mi'kmaw ontological views to assist in this meaning making as an urban-Mi'kmaw woman to help with my meaning making process. By embracing my cultural ontological traits as a mixed-blood, urban-Mi'kmaw woman with one foot in the western world, and one foot in the traditional world I was able to “translate” the meaning making outcomes into epistemological, ontological, axiological and methodological categories (Simpson, 2017).

Wilson (2008) describes axiology as “the ethics or morals that guide the search for knowledge and judge which information is worthy of searching for” (p. 34). Distinction-based approaches recognize that pan-indigeneity is an ongoing act of colonization, erasing the unique characteristics, “sovereignty and Inherent Jurisdictions of pre-existing, modern, and future Indigenous nations and Peoples in Canada” (2019, July 28). Indigenous groups are unique, place-based, and occupy distinct ecosystems (Maliseet Nation Conservation Council and Wolastoqey Nation New Brunswick, 2020). The purpose of this study is to take a distinctions-based approach to adapt the 7-directions model to the Kijipuktuk community.

The meaning making process informs the first step of the new paradigm. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) states that as Indigenous scholars we need to find ways of engaging using decolonizing methodologies. Meaning making bookends the new paradigm as a holistic, decolonized model with step seven’s, 7-Direction Indigenous Research Paradigm, which resides at the centre of the medicine wheel, and which all other elements contribute to and model themselves around. With the medicine wheel as a model for the new paradigm’s framework, there is an ebb and flow between each of the areas of the wheel. At the centre of the wheel, which everything revolves around, the 7th “step” is the paradigm, the foundation on which everything interconnects. While the sectors of the medicine wheel are delineated into 7 directions, there is a relationality between each of those areas, as one area is addressed the others will be influenced as well. It is a holistic model that respects the relationships we have within ourselves, with our environment, with our history and our future.

Indigenous oral histories are considered sacred, providing lessons on Indigenous values, roles, medicines, and protocols for ceremony. They have survived throughout colonialism and colonization because of their oral nature, avoiding erasure through written contexts. Engaging with a storyteller is a ceremony (Wilson, 2008), it is a lesson in respectful engagement, learning, healing and interpretation (Archibald, 2008). Engaging in story-acts, or storytelling with Mi’kmaw participants I began with the culture that I understand best. I used Mi’kmaw cultural



protocols for engagement and embraced Mi'kmaw values including respect, reciprocity, honour, love, equanimity, and patience (teachings gained in conversation with Elder Tom Christmas, February 2020 as he taught a Culture class at MNFC, while relaying research conducted in the 1960's by Don Awalt). As I delve deeper into the story-acts of the participants, my meaning making expanded to include other Indigenous ontologies with respect to cultural and intersectional identities.

This methodology chapter is also a decolonizing process for myself as a researcher, through which I delve deeper into my Mi'kmaw culture to make meaning of the story-act's ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology as well as a lesson in decolonization for those who use the tools that are developed through this thesis.

My traditional Mi'kmaw upbringing, cultural teachings, and decolonization studies have helped me to reflexively prepare to engage with the stories and knowledge holders in a culturally appropriate and respectful manner. I listened intently to the storytellers' words as I engaged them in conversational storytelling to find the relatability within me to best understand their words and the deeper meanings behind their words. Then I went back and listened again, journaling my thoughts each time. After listening to the recordings multiple times, I found the ways in which their stories connected with the new research model when they related their experiences, both good and bad, with previous research experiences. I found the meaning through a cultural ontological connection that connected us as Indigenous people living in a world where identity and voice have oftentimes been ignored or misrepresented. I focused on the parts of their stories and ideologies that fit within the model.

## ***Chapter 4 – Meaning Making (Analysis) Toward a 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model***

### ***4.1 The Act of Storytelling and Having the Cultural Knowledge to Understand Them.***

I engaged in story-acts with several key Indigenous knowledge holders who are either currently engaging in research projects or have in the past. My process for meaning making was to fully engage with the participants during their storytelling and to record the interaction on Zoom. This way, I could return to their words and take the time to contemplate what they were saying, as well as to reflect on the spiritual impacts their words had on me. I sat down with my cup of *pitew* (tea) and re-listened to their stories several times, journaling my thoughts. This chapter highlights portions of their stories that held significance for me during my meaning making process, as well as significantly contributed to enhancing the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model. I continue using my previous formatting of highlighting areas of the conversations as people picked up the talking stick *in italics*, and I add my meaning making interpretations of what I've learned in non-italics. I explain how the meaning making that I gathered from the stories has either enhanced or challenged me to re-think certain aspects of my model.

It is important to point out that the meaning making that I undertook for this chapter and the model are reflective of how I identified related medicine wheel concepts of mind, body, spirit and emotion from within the stories.

*The talking stick has been picked up....*

*“Your grandmother was right, when you talk about stories, for example.*

*You learn something from them, right. And that’s true. I grew up in that age, those old storytellers, listening to old people sat around the living room.*

*Sometimes, I laugh at people when they talk about Two-Eyed Seeing, and I think, ‘you know what, we should have did, this concept of two-eared hearing’, and I*

*took a LOT away from those stories. I only wish now that I had listened with both ears...that's the thing, no matter how much they research us they're never going to get inside those stories, right. The stuff that your grandma, my grandpa, all our people gave us. That's our learning; that's our being. It bothers me when I see non-Indigenous people doing Indigenous research" (HorseDER6, in conversation, March 11, 2021).*

In listening to this story, I feel validated. I feel like someone (and not just someone, but a knowledge keeper and Elder who I hold in high regard) recognizes my reasoning for doing this project, but also what I have interpreted from meaning making throughout my personal decolonization process. Our stories hold knowledge and meaning that only we as Mi'kmaw people listening to Mi'kmaw stories can understand to its fullest extent. There are meanings that are still to be learned from our stories and we actively work toward learning and understanding them by listening repeatedly to our knowledge keepers for current and ancestral wisdom.

*The talking stick has been picked up...*

*"The key to Indigenous, Mi'kmaw Studies is the language itself. Because, not hidden, but in that language, the language IS theory. How you apply it, how you interpret it is the methodology, right. The language becomes the key that unlocks that cultural memory that is still there in that community" (HorseDER6, in conversation March 11, 2021).*

*You know exactly who you are referring to when you have these teachings...we were given seven sacred gifts from the Creator: love, honesty, humility, respect, truth, patience, and wisdom. It is our guide for when someone becomes an Elder in our communities. Every seven years, in most cases, you gain one of those gifts. We have rights, privileges and responsibilities for how you go*

*about exercising those gifts from the Creator (MooseDYT5, in conversation, March 5, 2021).*

Using storytelling as the method to learn and transfer knowledge, a living and sacred thing in Mi'kmaw beliefs, provides the listener (researcher) with an opportunity to learn the real, authentic, contextualized nuances of what the knowledge keeper is trying to say. The process of listening and hearing the storyteller is an ingrained and built-in response that is taught to Mi'kmaw children from birth and as we grow up learning the values and the responsibilities that we have as Mi'kmaw people, L'nuk, we understand that as we learn we have a responsibility to pass that knowledge on to the next generation. That responsibility was emphasized during a talk given by Albert Marshall, that my Elder, Tom Christmas directed me to. He stated:

*“We are dying of loneliness. We are constantly wondering and striving not to be just acknowledged as the original inhabitants of this hemisphere, but we are dying of loneliness here, because we are not given the opportunity to share some of the stories and wisdom that the ancestors...and just like the word isolation implies...true isolation isn't just geographic, but also spiritual. Living in this existence of Indigenous people in a colonized world we are denied the opportunity to share ancient knowledge” ((2019, December 19). YouTube. 2019 Global Symposium - Albert Marshall - Two-Eyed Seeing - YouTube).*

Therefore, as a Mi'kmaw researcher, my responsibility in this project is to learn what I need to know to build this model, using the knowledge that I gain through storytelling and then relay that processed information back to both, the academy and more importantly to the Mi'kmaq.

#### ***4.2 Improving Research Protocols for Engagement***

While going through the meaning making process, the storytellers' experiences with previous research addressed areas in which researchers can engage with Indigenous

people in a more respectful way such as through increased cultural and historical awareness. This may require the help of a local Elder who knows the ways in which researchers have worked within community previously and the cultural protocols that the community has identified as knowledge that needs to be brought to the attention of researchers.

I had a conversation with my Elder and knowledge keeper recently about Two-Eyed Seeing as a way to translate the Indigenous methods of storytelling and meaning making back to western academics. He said that when researchers approach him with a set of questions he thinks of a courtroom and wonders if this researcher was a lawyer, would he be charged with leading the witness; that as a research participant you would constantly be contemplating on what the researcher wants to hear. He recommended that when researchers want to engage with him he prefers to tell a story, because a story conveys the authenticity of the information, and it is our sacred duty to only convey knowledge that we are indeed familiar with, and we show that through a story (MooseDYT5, in conversation, March 5, 2021).

*“The research that I’ve been doing lately, has been very rewarding in that the organization is interested in learning how to do things better. They are interested in creating the changes were necessary. And recognizing that they cannot tell our stories for us, they can help us to have some ways to place our stories so that they will be better heard. But we are the ones who have to do the telling of the stories. Yeah...*

*“I took control of it. And I brought it back to our community. And I stopped. Honestly, I stopped listening to the person who thought they had that white gaze over all of it. Mm hmm. And I asked the community, I went into the community, and I sat down with people and I had frank conversations, and I had real talk. And I did what they said, had to go into the research. Right on. And*

*before I put the research forward, I came back to every single participant. And I asked them again, is this how you want me to represent your voice? Right? And even on the very last day, before I put it forward to the public, they had the opportunity to say no. And I was able to make the institution that I was working with extremely uncomfortable, the multiple institutions I was working with extremely uncomfortable that at any point, all of that money could be for nothing. Yeah. And we should have that power, we should have that ability to consent. And taking that was really a guiding moment in my life” (TurtleEHA6, in conversation, March 4, 2021).*

*“There's never a sense of ownership because, to me, it's like, for example, when we went to the [name] Research Institute there and [researcher name], every one of [their] documents, and every one of [their] presentations is labeled on the bottom. It's like property of the [research institute name]. It's like no, it's not. It's like Aboriginal traditional knowledge, that's Aboriginal ecological knowledge that belongs to the people, that doesn't belong to you or your institute. And that's our ownership part to me”*  
*(YellowSpottedSalamanderDTD0, in conversation, March 2, 2021).*

As I sat and contemplated these stories, drinking my *pitewe* (tea), I can feel my mother's presence in the room. She is one of the strongest people I know, and she taught me how to stand up for myself at a young age. As I listen to the stories about standing up to, and sometimes against lead researchers for inclusion and a voice in the research design and ownership, it reminds me of my mother's voice telling me to stand up and fight for what is right, and not to be somebody's “token Indian”, and the advice I received from a mentor who advised me to take every opportunity to gain more training and education. even if I am in a tokenized position.

Considering this from a mind, body, spirit, and emotion (four-direction medicine wheel quadrants) perspective, and the necessity for a balanced medicine wheel, my interpretation is thus: tokenism is an attack on the mental, spiritual and emotional elements of our wholistic, and balanced worldview. To deny the ownership of one's own knowledge and information is to deny one's spiritual existence, especially as our sacred gifts from the Creator, including our knowledge comes with the responsibility to share and inform the next generations that come after us. And to physically take ownership of the knowledge that is shared has an effect on the physical quadrant of the medicine wheel. Thus, to keep our personal, cultural and traditional selves intact, we must remain the owners of our own stories, and we do that by being in control of the information that is shared, how it is shared, and to whom it is shared with.

As I began this project, my own journey of personal decolonization began to impact me spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually. It was through this process that I rediscovered my own inherent strengths that guided and helped me come to terms with the difficult realities I experienced. It pushed me further and deeper into my culture and I am grateful that the process had its difficult moments. Those are the moments I learned the most from.

The ethical dilemmas that I faced, the cultural and academic hurdles that I encountered, and the growth that I gained from the experience imbued itself in the research model that I designed: the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model. The stories that I listened to after sharing my model and the meaning that I took from those stories influenced the outcomes of the model and while I focused mainly on the initial protocols for engagement based on cultural identities, inclusive of intersectionality, the stories provided so much more. They enhanced the methodology through the use of the Mi'kmaw language to understand abstract concepts. The stories gave ontological and epistemological clues to a deeper understanding of what being

Mi'kmaq means on a sacred, spiritual level. They also provided me with a sense of connection to my research participants, or storytellers, in a way that a questionnaire or survey could never provide.

#### 4.3 The 7 – Direction Medicine Wheel Research Model

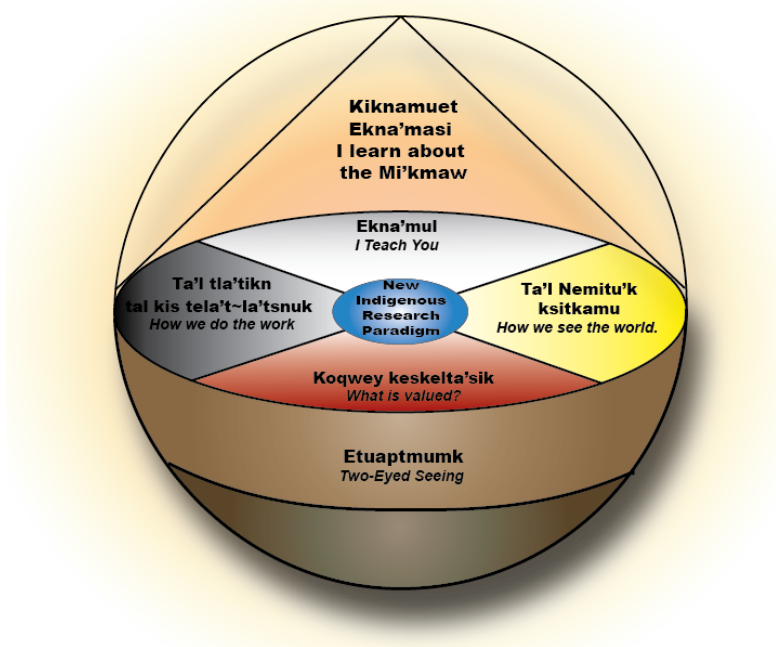


Figure 11 7 Direction Medicine Wheel Research Model By Tammy Williams. Translations Provided By Thomas Christmas, Mi'kmaw Elder and Language Teacher

##### 4.3.1 Etuaptmumk – Two-Eyed Seeing

I grounded myself in a Two-Eyed Seeing approach throughout this entire project. Two-Eyed Seeing, a term coined by Elders Murdena and Albert Marshall, views research through both Indigenous and western lenses, bringing the two worlds together to enhance research by addressing the strengths of Indigenous traditional knowledge and its long history of transgenerational knowledge of medicines, environment, relationality of species, and the interconnectedness of living species; western methods of gathering knowledge, analysis, and empirical processes are also considered as I relay the information back to the academy (Bartlett, et. al., 2012). The way in which I used Two-

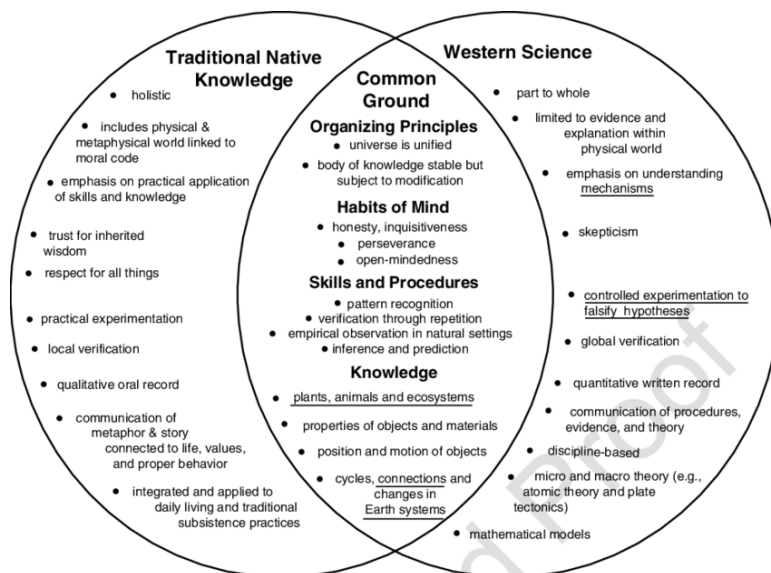


Eyed Seeing as a Mi'kmaw researcher, viewing the information that I gathered and I relayed back through a Mi'kmaw lens, while translating the theoretical, historical, epistemological, ontological and methodological information from the stories into a tool that western academics can also view through their western lens.

*“As a Mi'kmaw person I see everything from my Mi'kmaw lens. If I was Haudenosaunee or any other tribe, I would see everything from that lens” (MooseDYT5, in conversation March 11, 2021).*

To gather the information that I needed for this chapter I engaged in storytelling conversations with my Elders and Indigenous researchers as a way to best inform how to improve upon the original Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP) and add information that serves as a further decolonization of the IRP by closely examining protocols for engagement, and what they wish researchers knew before they approached them with requests to participate or partner in research projects. I used meaning making as my method of “analysis”, as it most closely resembled our traditional way of understanding the lessons conveyed through storytelling from a cultural perspective.

Figure 9 is a depiction of Two-Eyed Seeing that brings both western and Indigenous worldviews together to find their common ground. The Two-Eyed seeing approach views



**Figure 12 Similarities and differences between traditional Native knowledge and western science (Chapin, et al., (2013).**

research through both an Indigenous lens looking at the traditional knowledge, culture, and medicines while using a Western lens to address the science behind why traditional medicines, methods, and materials work the way they do (Bartlett et al., 2012).

#### ***4.4 The 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model***

What do I wish non-Indigenous researchers knew before they engaged with me as an Indigenous participant or partner in a research project? This is the one question that kept announcing itself in my inner dialogue whenever I thought about how I could take the decolonization of research methodologies further than it's already gone. As a previous participant, as a research assistant, and as a research subject, what did I wish they knew before they engaged with me?

During conversational story-acts with Mi'kmaw Elders, and researchers answered that question for me one day, they said,

*“They [non-Indigenous researchers] are very linear, and we're not. We're very left-recognized that I'm a right-side thinker, and so the pedagogy that you approach someone is different. So, to me, that would probably be the big thing, is that not everybody is set to go through that path, that linear path. Artistic people, those who are musical, are very right-side brain thinkers, and that's a very low number; I think the percentage is 12%. That's why so many people fall through the cracks...I talk about this in art class. There's always been those one or two kids in your class that was an artist. But if I take a group of 100 aboriginal kids that number jumps from 12% to 67%. The majority of aboriginal people they see things differently, they process things differently and they understand things differently. And, if they could understand that there was more than one way, that would be my thing that they knew, or that I wish they'd consider” (YellowspottedsalamanderDTD0, in conversation, March 2, 2021).*

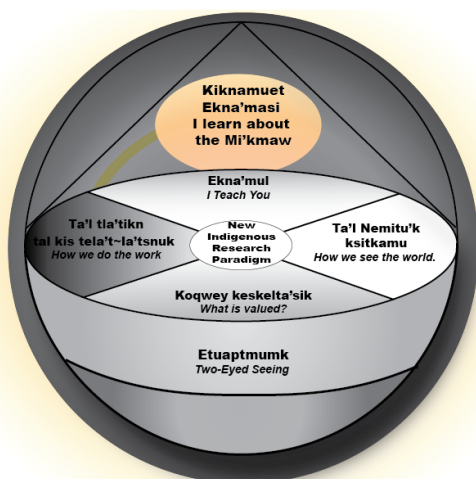
*“Ethnology, anthropology, all those terms that created this huge divide in Indigenous communities, boom, they're gone. We're going to use our own, and I think I spoke to you about it, theory and methodology is, is our own language right” (HorseDER6 in conversation March 11, 2021)?*

What I learned from the previous two stories was that to truly understand Indigenous ways of knowing, we must look to the language for the embedded context and knowledge. The language holds the keys to accessing those aspects of research with Mi'kmaw people that will include the context needed to understand the mind, body, spirit and emotions that the qualitative data holds. It has reignited the desire that I have to learn my Mi'kmaw language and become more fluent, a journey that I have been on since I was a child, and one that I have been pursuing even ore as an adult.

The 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Research Model has been developed to serve as a bridge between academic requirements and Indigenous knowledge. The ability to address differing philosophies around the transfer of knowledge comes from a Two-Eyed Seeing approach to research.

#### 4.4.1 Kiknamuet or ekna'masi (I learn)

*“To us, decolonization is a process of reclaiming past traditions to heal*



**Figure 13 - 7 Direction Medicine Wheel Research Model by Tammy Williams. Translations Provided by Thomas Christmas, Mi'kmaw Elder and Language Teacher**

*while building a better future...And towards indigenization, we hope that there'll be some - some relationship developed. Because we're very, very seriously concerned of when we look at that word "relationship". And I can, I can clearly say for me, the fundamental principle of any relationship is through the exchange*

*of stories, exchange of stories. Because it truly is exchange that you and I have, or you and a non, non-native brother and sister. We know who they are, where they come from, and why they are here and once those things are pretty clearly understood, then we can begin to talk about where are we going? Right. And this is where this word indigenisation will then become much more meaningful”...*

*“When you put your concepts into text, you are only speaking from your head, but when you are given the opportunity to share then, you are speaking from the heart. Which I think is much more appropriate when information is conveyed orally, rather than in the written format” (MooseDYT5, in conversation, March 11, 2021).*

Through the exchange of stories, you gain an understanding of how the storyteller identifies themselves. *Are they Mi'kmaq? Inuit? Cree? Non-Indigenous? Mixed-race? Are they two-spirited or LGBTQIA+? Do they have traditional beliefs or western beliefs? Where do they live? Are they away from their home community?* All of these questions can inform a researcher on proper protocols to engage this person with.

Quoting Patricia Hill Collins and Selma Bilge:

*“Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. The events and conditions of social and political life and the self can seldom be understood as shaped by one factor. They are generally shaped by many factors in diverse and mutually influencing ways. When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are better understood as being shaped not by a single axis of social division, be it race or gender or class, but by many axes that work together and influence each other. Intersectionality as an analytic tool gives people better access to the complexity of the world and of themselves” (Collins & Bilge, 2016, pg. 11).*

As researchers engage with Indigenous peoples, it is important to remember that Indigenous people come in all shades, have varied and oftentimes traumatic histories, in many instances have lived in poverty, and have homicide rates 6 times higher than non-Indigenous people<sup>6</sup>. Gender diversity is, in Mi'kmaq tradition, a non-taboo. Our historic matrilineal and matriarchal ways are re-emerging after centuries of systemic degradation as grass roots organizations like the Native Women's Association of Nova Scotia conduct their own research contributing to the sharing of oral histories related to clanships, clan mothers, the traditional power roles that women played historically (Eastern Door Indigenous Women's Association, 2019). In short, all of these overlapping ways in which people identify themselves as individuals and communities contribute to the ways in which people want to be recognized, acknowledged, and respectfully engaged.

The following chapter discusses the key findings in relation to the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Paradigm's layers of wholistic knowledge, and the ways in which they can be addressed through a non-Indigenous lens with the assistance of an Indigenous "guide" to the engagement process. The model is developed through a Mi'kmaw and western Two-Eyed Seeing approach to bring together the epistemology, ontology, axiology and methodology.

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<sup>6</sup> *JustFacts - Indigenous overrepresentation in the criminal justice system*. Retrieved

## ***Chapter 5 Key Findings: Developing the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel***

### ***Indigenous Research Model***

While engaging in *Kiknamuet or Ekna'masi* (Learning about the Mi'kmaq) consultation and research is based upon ethical protocols for engagement and principles of inclusion, respect, and reciprocity (Ball & Janyst. 2008; Pigeon & Cox. 2002). Positioning myself as a Mi'kmaq academic who listens to stories with an Indigenous ear, I learned from my Elders, storytellers, and Indigenous peers their desire to have our traditional methods of knowledge and ways in which we interact with the world acknowledged and valued within academia (also see Graveline. 2000). *Kiknamuet or Ekna'masi* is located at the peak of the medicine wheel and guides the steps that follow. It is also the guiding force when using this framework from one Indigenous nation to another. It is important to emphasize that Mi'kmaq beliefs are not the same as Cree beliefs, and Cree are different from Haudenosaunee. Thus, the intersectionality of Indigenous nations can affect protocols for engagement, gender relations, traditional ways of seeing the world, and more. Therefore, it is essential that the inclusion of research participants from each nation is acknowledged and respected (Simpson, L. 2011; Simpson, L.B. 2014; Simpson, L.B. 2017; Wilson, S. 2001; Wilson, S. 2008).

The colours and locations of the quadrants in a medicine wheel vary by culture and adaptation due to unique belief systems, cultural and traditional practices, and positioning in (or outside of) their community and nation. In this example I have placed the white quadrant at the top of the circle, as the north, representing the Elders and the knowledge that they have gained throughout their lifetimes (see Figure 11). Although traditionally we would start with the eastern quadrant, as this is the beginning of the medicine wheel's life cycle, future projects should be guided by Elder involvement, and they are usually represented in the northern quadrant. This quadrant will inform the

researcher with the most valuable information as the following quadrants will be addressed through a thorough understanding of the epistemology of the Indigenous people that are guiding the research paradigm. Using water as a metaphor, Indigenous knowledge, existence, and relationality with the world is living and the quadrants of a medicine wheel are also living in the world, and as such interplay within the context of the wheel, flowing from one quadrant to another, around the circle, and back and forth toward the centre (blue) of the wheel, embracing Indigenous wholistic theory (Wilson 2008, Absolon. 2010). The Elders' oral histories and traditional knowledge will flow throughout the entire paradigm as they hold the knowledge necessary to address the other elements of the paradigm. Inclusion of the Elders in the initial consultation will benefit both the community and the researcher(s) as they will help determine how the next steps should proceed.

## 5.1 Understanding the Model from a Two-Eyed Seeing Perspective

### 5.1.1 Ekna'mul (I teach you)

Ekna'mul is located in the white quadrant of the medicine wheel and represents the first steps of learning (see Figure 4). As a researcher learns the epistemology from the experienced Elder, using Indigenous research methods such as reviewing Creation stories, storytelling, oral histories, interviews, and through the legends and traditional stories they will learn where they “live” within the

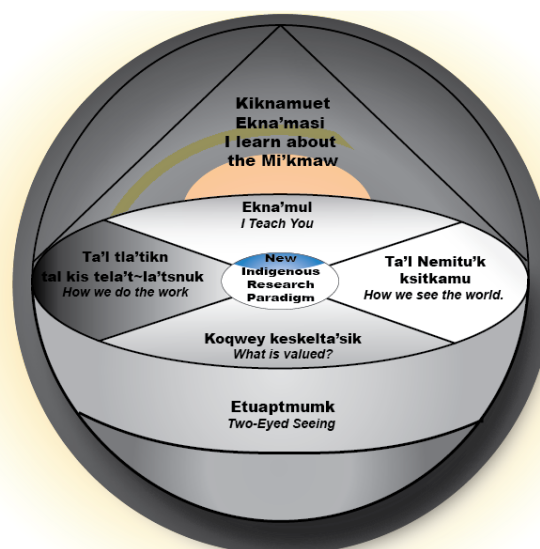


Figure 14 - 7 Direction Medicine Wheel Research Model by Tammy Williams. Translations Provided by Thomas Christmas, Mi'kmaw Elder and Language Teacher

research; where the Indigenous people “live” within their world; and where the research will “live” after it is complete. This knowledge informs the research paradigm’s ontology.

My methods for this step in conducting the research in the development of this model included engaging with urban and community-based Elders in various ways by being respectful of their position and personal rules for academic engagement. I connected with my Elders and asked them if I was doing this in a good way, and how to maintain that throughout the engagements. Gaining their insights into the development of my project, the tools, and the responsibilities I had in sharing the findings framed my ethical considerations from a Mi’kmaw lens. Battise, drawing from *Principles and Guidelines for the Protection of the Heritage of Indigenous People*, in which a holistic Indigenous research agenda was ratified, states:

*“They acknowledge that the heritage of an Indigenous people is a complete knowledge system with its own concepts of epistemology, and its own scientific and logical validity. They also acknowledge that diverse elements of an Indigenous people’s heritage can be fully learned or understood only by means of the pedagogy traditionally employed by these peoples themselves. Indigenous knowledge comprises all knowledge pertaining to a particular people and its territory, the nature or use of which has been transmitted from generation to generation. This knowledge includes ‘all kinds of scientific, agricultural, technical and ecological knowledge, including cultigens, medicines and the rational use of flora and fauna’ (Battiste, 2005. p.7-8).*

This holistic epistemological approach informs the philosophical method to the acquisition, processing and dissemination of research data and knowledge.

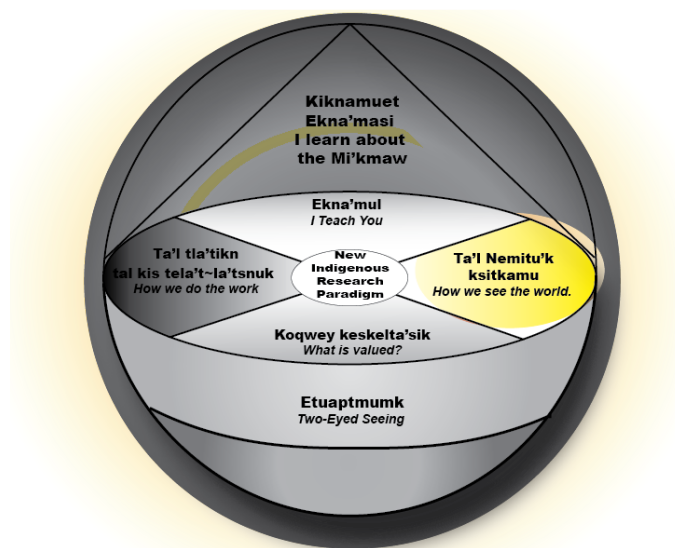


### 5.1.2 *Ta'l nemitu'k ksitkamu (How we see the world)*

By understanding research from a Mi'kmaq or Indigenous ontological perspective, a researcher can understand the people with whom they are working with, by understanding how they relate to the world around them, how ceremony influences their existence.

When engaging in Indigenous research the use of stories, or “conversation method” (Kovach, 2010), a relationship

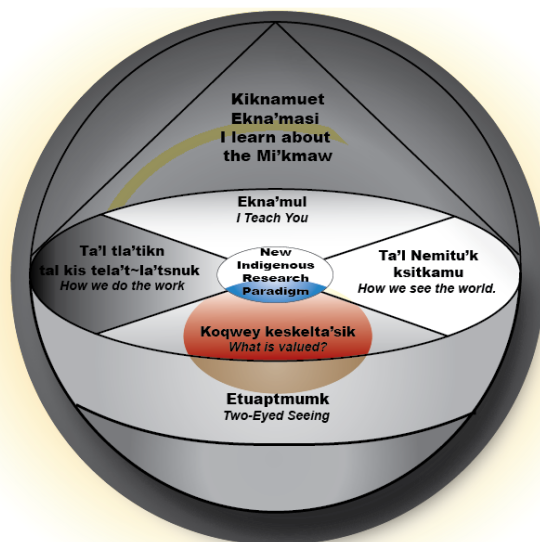
develops between the storyteller and the listener (researcher). This holistic approach to data gathering has been criticized as bias by western, positivistic researchers, but in Indigenous research it is relational and respectful (Wilson, S. 2008). *Ta'l nemitu'k ksitkamu* is in the yellow quadrant, in the eastern direction (see Figure 12). This is where knowledge starts. As a researcher learns where they are within their world, where the Indigenous people exist within their holistic world, and when the research is seen through an Indigenous lens, then true understanding of the data can occur. Once that basis for understanding one's place in the world, and within the research then determining what is valuable to research must be assessed. As the medicine wheel shows the holistic nature of the Indigenous Research Paradigm, determining what is valuable to the research is holistically learned through ongoing epistemological lessons and guidance, positioning, and by learning the values of the people that inform the paradigm.



*Figure 15 - 7 Direction Medicine Wheel Research Model by Tammy Williams. Translations Provided by Thomas Christmas, Mi'kmaq Elder and Language Teacher*

### 5.1.3 Kiqwey keskalta'sik (What is valuable?)

Axiology answers what is valuable, and what is worth knowing based on cultural and traditional values. As Indigenous research is holistic and addresses the “inherent bias” of Indigenous researchers, having insight into the axiological beliefs of the people and community that the research is being conducted within is essential to the understanding of why some data is



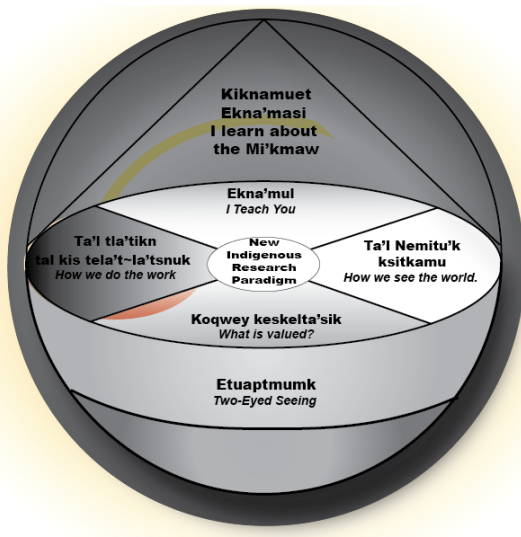
**Figure 16 - 7 Direction Medicine Wheel Research Model by Tammy Williams. Translations Provided by Thomas Christmas, Mi'kmaw Elder and Language Teacher**

considered useful and some are not (Robinson *in* Battiste. Ch3. 2016). It also helps provide researchers some insight into what specific communities might deem valuable enough to be researched. *Kiqwey keskalta'sik* is in the south quadrant in red (see Figure 13), and in other medicine wheels this represents the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of life, the youth years when a person learns what is right and wrong, what consequences are, and what values they will hold for their lifetime. As an Indigenous researcher, my positioning as a Mi'kmaw woman, scholar, activist, teacher and mentor provide my axiological background that has been informed through relating to the world around me through Mi'kmaw ceremonies where I learned the seven gifts from the Creator, (love, honesty, humility, respect, truth, patience, and wisdom), and how to embrace those gifts (Wilson. 2008, 80-124).

considered useful and some are not (Robinson *in* Battiste. Ch3. 2016). It also helps provide researchers some insight into what specific communities might deem valuable enough to be researched. *Kiqwey keskalta'sik* is in the south quadrant in red (see Figure 13), and in other medicine wheels this represents the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of life, the youth years when

### 5.1.4 *Ta'l tla'tikn or tal kis tela't~la'tsnuk (How we do the work)*

Indigenous methodologies that include Indigenous methods of data collection, analysis, and communication increases the opportunities for holistic understandings of the collected data. By using methods such as a talking circle, or kinesthetic learning while



**Figure 17 - 7 Direction Medicine Wheel Research Model by Tammy Williams. Translations Provided by Thomas Christmas, Mi'kmaw Elder and Language Teacher**

hearing the stories and legends that provide information on how, why, when and who normally performs tasks. This information adds to the type of data collected, as well as the depth of meaning that data has to the Indigenous people that researchers are working with. *Ta'l tla'tikn or tal kis tela't~la'tsnuk* is in the western, black quadrant and is considered the adult years in a

person's lifecycle (see Figure 14). This is the time of life that we "do", we live and exist and perform the ceremonies; we are not childish and naive anymore, but we are still gaining *wisdom*. During this time, I am living within this quadrant of my life-cycle and as an intersectional Indigenous woman who is not considered a visible minority, has lived off-reserve most of my life, has found community in the urban setting more so than within my official community that I hold band status within—it is a time of learning to exist in two worlds. This intersectionality is what has informed my approaches to academic, private and community-based research, *taking the best of both worlds* into consideration when approaching research and other types of projects. This approach has led to the use of storytelling, or "conversation method" as a method of inquiry; to using a medicine wheel as a framework for papers, project management, and to guide my thesis;

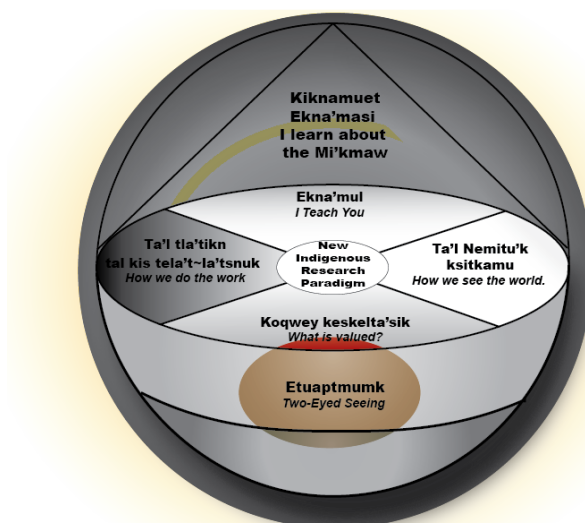
to using traditional forms of knowledge transfer through ceremony, song, dance and kinesthetic learning in combination with stories, to a future study measuring the growth of cognitive empathy through the use of traditional talking circles, being adapted for the recording of data without breaking cultural confidentiality protocols. This blending of methods is done in consultation with Elders, knowledge keepers, and other mentors, while also adhering to strict ethical procedures, informed from the axiology, or value systems.

This conversation answers several questions that I had going into this project. How do we wish to be approached? According to my Elder, not with a list of preformatted questions. It also answers a question about how we want things to be done when designing the research project, with an open mind and the willingness to hear the nuances of information that are deeply ingrained in the stories that the Elders and Knowledge Keepers hold within their oral histories.

### 5.1.5 *Etuaptmumk (Two-Eyed Seeing)*

This model is grounded in Two-Eyed Seeing as a way of bringing Indigenous and Western methodologies together to create a dynamic, respectful and mutually beneficial working relationship between everyone involved in the research project (see Figure 15).

Due to the positional superiority that western academia holds in regard to Indigenous people, their culture, and their traditional knowledge racial stereotypes and a sense of “we know better” is still

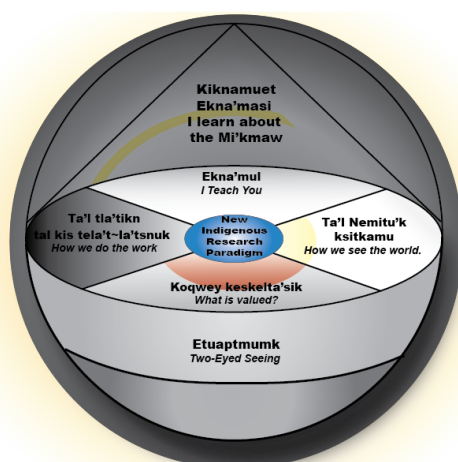


*Figure 18 - 7 Direction Medicine Wheel Research Model By Tammy Williams. Translations Provided By Thomas Christmas, Mi'kmaw Elder And Language Teacher*

pervasive in society and the academy (Brake. 2016). A Two-Eyed Seeing approach “enact[s] First Voice as pedagogy and methodology (Graveline. 2000. p.363; also see Simpson. 2011; Simpson. 2017), while also expecting certain aspects of western methodological frameworks but not conceding their First Voice’s authority, expertise or intergenerational experiences (Simpson. 2005).

Two-Eyed Seeing approaches, when engaged meaningfully, without tokenizing Indigenous Elders or participants, can enhance western research methods by providing alternative approaches to the collection, interpretation of, and understanding of information.

### 5.1.6 The 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model



**Figure 19 - 7 Direction Medicine Wheel Research Model by Tammy Williams. Translations Provided by Thomas Christmas, Mi'kmaw Elder and Language Teacher**

I struggle finding a Mi'kmaw interpretation of the new model's name. It is the blue circle at the centre of the model (see Figure 16). In a 7-direction medicine wheel this is the point where the self resides, in the centre of the medicine wheel; it is a point of convergence for all the teachings that are gained from the

wholism<sup>7</sup> of the model. In wholism, as I understand it to be, the interconnectedness of the

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<sup>7</sup> I use the term “wholism” instead of “holism” in recognition that the whole is greater than the parts. I am aware of the alternative spelling and as an act of decolonization I have chosen to use the term, spelled with a “w” to embrace how my understanding of the concept is in relation to the “whole”, and not the “hole”.

world around us, the spirits that reside in every living organism, our ancestors, and the Earth exist in a spiritual plane and in this spiritual plane all the segments of the medicine wheel are interwoven with each other on a spiritual level, coming together at the centre, within us (the blue circle). So, at the centre of the new model is the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Mi'kmaq (Indigenous) Research Model. There is no direct Mi'kmaq translation that means 7-Directions, or 7-Direction medicine wheel.

The 7-Direction Indigenous Research Model is at the centre of the diagram, in blue (see Figure 9). In the development of an Indigenous research paradigm there are four elements that need to be addressed: the epistemology, ontology, axiology and methodology (Kovach. 2010; Graveline. 2000; Smith. 2005; Absolon. 2010; Coulthard. 2017; Ball & Janyst. 2008; Kovach. 2010; Pigeon & Cox. 2002; Lavallee. 2009; Wilson. 2001; Evans et al., 2009; Simpson. 2011; Battise. 2016; Augustine. 2016; Henderson. 2016; Wilson. 2008). Using a holistic approach to the development of the paradigm with a 7-point medicine wheel provides the researcher with a paradigm that is inclusive, relational, respectful, reciprocal, and ethical (Ball & Janyst. 2008), while respecting Indigenous protocols for engagement. The centre of a medicine wheel represents “self” in other medicine wheels; when used within a research project it is the core piece of the project that all the quadrants relate to as “a manifestation of the whole” (Absolon. 2010. P.84).

An additional, simplified tool has been provided in the Appendix for the use specific to Mi'kmaq communities who wish to use this new research model as a guide for future engagements with non-Indigenous researchers. The tool is designed to describe the elements of the model in a graphical format that is easy to understand and use as a guide to determine if and when they would like to engage with researchers based on the Mi'kmaq epistemology, ontology, axiology and methodologies. (Also see Appendix A for the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model handout).

## ***5.2 A Summary of My Research***

This chapter is a summary of my research and findings that I undertook as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for my degree of Master of Arts in Women and Gender Studies. I first discuss key findings for the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model followed by a summary, implications, and recommendations for engaging with Indigenous peoples in research. I then provide some concluding reflections followed by a personal epilogue.

As I planned out my thesis research, I was committed to decolonizing every step of the thesis-process as much as possible in the development of the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model. My choice of methodology, methods, writing style, and the tool that I created was geared to achieving this as an offering to the Mi'kmaq. As I learned from my Elders, it is my responsibility to take what I've learned and relay it back to my community. This requires standing my ground against the ethics board regarding tobacco offerings to Indigenous Knowledge Holders as a sign of respect and appreciation. My personal decolonization journey throughout this past year has also created a much deeper understanding of who I am and has given me a sense of courage and a voice of my own.

Stories! Ancient wisdom, contemporary knowledge, and everything in between can be learned from stories. Mi'kmaq people have a long history of preserving their cultural identity through the retelling of stories that have survived colonial acts that include centralization onto reserves, the imposition of residential schools, systemic racism and violence, and this is why the ancestors told us we would have to keep retelling these stories. The participants that I connected with conveyed more knowledge and wisdom through their stories that can be conveyed here. Therefore, I have included excerpts and with my own understandings and interpretations of what they were saying through the meaning making, a method of "analysis" which strongly reminded me of my

grandmother's words when she described how I would learn something new every time I listened to a story.

I grounded myself in Two-Eyed Seeing, an approach to research that views the world through both an Indigenous lens and a western lens. This approach gave me the ability to engage with my participants using Indigenous methods and translate the information back to western academics. This approach has also given me a true sense of who I am in this world. As someone with mixed-ancestry I had a very difficult time growing up understanding who I was as a person in two very different worlds. During a visit to Eskasoni, a Mi'kmaq community in Cape Breton, in the early 2000's I met Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall who were introducing the concept of Two-Eyed Seeing. It was an epiphany moment for me as I finally had a sense of identity without having to deny either side of myself. That teaching stayed with me for many years, and I knew this was how I needed to approach this thesis in developing the 7 Direction Medicine Wheel Research Model.

The model began as a four-direction medicine wheel with the original four elements of the Indigenous Research Paradigm, and it was after sitting down one night reading Shawn Wilson's *Research is Ceremony (2008)*, I saw a sentence that made me ask, "*Why is this based on the commonalities of Indigenous people, why isn't it individualized for Indigenous nations? Is it implied? How can this be improved?*" The new 7-direction medicine wheel model developed from there and after speaking with Elders from the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre about how I should go about doing this and expanding on something by using a Mi'kmaw lens, the new model was created based on an Anishnaabeg medicine wheel. From there I had to see if it would work. I used the steps that I outlined for my own approaches for engaging with the participants' storytelling: Kiknamuet or ekna'masi (also see chapter 4), ekna'mul, ta'l nemitu'k ksitkamu, koqwey keskelta'sik, ta'l tla'tikn or talk is tela't~la'tsnuk, etuaptmumk, and



brought everything together wholistically as the new 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model.

I learned about the Mi'kmaq through stories that I grew up with (*kiknamuet*), new stories that my Kjipuktuk Elders shared (*ekna'mul*) about the culture and engagement protocols including traditional ceremonial gift-giving, sharing of knowledge, remaining humble in my process and giving voice to those who haven't had a voice, or feel their stories getting lonely for lack of retelling. I learned how we see the world (*ta'l nemitu'k*) through a sacred relationship with every living thing in the world (*msit no'kmaq* – all my relations).

I learned that the values we hold are gifts from the Creator (*Koqwey keskelta'sik*), gifts that should be my guide as I engage with my research project at every intersection, with every participant, and through the sharing of the knowledge that I gained with others, and as such I have created a tool to coincide with this thesis that is geared toward Mi'kmaw communities who chose to use it as a guide to future research projects as either researchers, or as partners and participants in research.

I learned that there are ways in which Indigenous people can contribute to the research design process (*ta'l tla'tikn or tal kis tela't-la'tsnuk*) that has been overlooked more often than not, and that when we are engaged for research, we want to have a say in how the information is gathered, used, and contributing to the community. When Indigenous people are put in charge of their own projects, and can choose how the work is done, there has been a greater contextual contribution to the knowledge that is gathered, especially if based on Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (ITK), has continues to evolve over hundreds if not thousands of years and relayed to each new generation through storytelling. And I learned that the most effective, and desired way for Elders to participate in research is through storytelling. Their stories are languishing within them

because they are looking for the right people to listen to them with the intention of them living on in our future generations (*netuklimpk*).

I learned that (etuaptmuk), Two-Eyed Seeing is about inclusion and respect for all worldviews and that by entering the “ontological tent” of those people that we wish to work with and approaching research through lenses that we haven’t seen through before brings about a sense of newness and freshness, and authenticity.

*I learned that two-eared hearing is just as important as two-eyed seeing. Two-eared hearing or listening with your ears and heart, but also with my spirit was important as I lived with the recordings of my storytellers to find my meaning in them. In some cases, I was able to clearly understand the message, and in others I had to listen again and again. There are messages in the stories that lead me to the next part of the conclusion (Fieldnotes, March 12, 2021).*

In response to the grand-tour questions that I posed to the storytellers, I learned that our knowledge keepers *want* to be engaged, but not tokenized. They want to have the opportunity to be given a voice in research proceedings and convey their messages using methods they are accustomed to, comfortable with, and to be respected when they ask for flexibility in the research project’s design. I also learned that the Mi’kmaq language holds keys to knowledge that hasn’t been accessed before because the language has been lost and through its rediscovery, Mi’kmaq people are rediscovering the nuances of the stories they heard growing up through introspective understandings based on the ways that only an understanding of the Mi’kmaq language can convey.

The development of the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model is inclusive of the original Indigenous Research Paradigm, and through the story-acts, meaning making, and Two-Eyed Seeing approaches it has been an ongoing evolution. I started with a 7-direction medicine wheel that was labeled exclusively in western language as I presented the initial model to academia. However, through the

story-act and meaning making processes I have changed those labels to use more colloquial language as well as, with the help of Mi'kmaw Elder and language instructor, Thomas Christmas, using Mi'kmaw terminology for the labels. There is some ambiguity in a couple of the labels as the interpretations from English to Mi'kmaw could depend on the context in which the words are being used.

I have learned about my place in this “ontological tent” (Tallbear, 2019) by delving deeper into my Mi'kmaw roots and traditions than I ever have before. I have gained teachings that go beyond the scope of this project from my Elders and the storytellers that have informed me that no matter where I live in Mi'kma'ki, there is no distinction between being on or off-reserve and that the identification of “off-reserve” Mi'kmaw is a construct that has been created through assimilation and colonization. I am Mi'kmaq; from Mi'kma'ki. Period.

### ***5.3 Recommendations***

As I reflect upon the teachings I received from my Elders, researchers, peers, and mentors in the development of this model, I come away with a feeling that this is a small yet, important step in the right direction of further decolonizing the research practices that historically was (and in many ways continue to be) done to us, on us, about us and I have set out the following recommendations for new, non-Indigenous researchers to reflect upon if they wish to engage with Indigenous/Mi'kmaw people using this model as a way forward..

1. Indigenous people are not all the same. We are people who have endured patriarchal, settler colonialism for centuries. Identities and languages have been stripped through centuries of cultural genocide, and that is why our knowledge keepers are so highly respected. They hold sacred knowledge that is alive through their stories. We are all at different stages of our development in rediscovering our traditional world.

2. Conduct background research with the help of a local Indigenous person to learn what you should know before you engage, such as the protocols for engagement, the offering of tobacco (or tea) as a sign of respect, the significance of the land and the acknowledgement that you are entering the traditional territory of an Indigenous nation that has been there for thousands of years, opposed to the hundred years your ancestors resided there. There is a wariness to engage with non-Indigenous researchers due to this historic, systemic erasure of identity.
3. When engaging with Indigenous people for research projects ask them if there is someone in the community who is knowledgeable in certain subjects and engage in a Two-Eyed Seeing methodology to enhance the research project with knowledge that can lead to improved methods for engagement, data collection, analysis, and communication.
4. Avoid tokenizing your Indigenous researchers, partners and participants by “listening with two ears” to what they have to say and giving them the opportunity to share their findings in their own voice, rather than through a western lens or voice.
5. Engage your research ethics boards in a talk on decolonizing the ethics process to enable Indigenous researchers to conduct studies through Indigenous worldviews and lenses.

#### ***5.4 Implications and Opportunities for Future Research Considerations***

First, I would like to point out that the overall goal for this contribution to the further decolonization of Indigenous research was intended as a project that could help my community and other Indigenous peoples with non-Indigenous researchers who continue to see us as subjects to be studied. The reception that I received from my elders and community members throughout Mi'kma'ki was very positive, saying it is valuable, it can be another step in the development of a new Indigenous research methodology. I

did not create this alone; I was guided through its development based on the respectful engagement with my Elders and their teachings.

That said, it is important to stress how I found the academic ethics process systemically biased toward non-Indigenous, western methods. The process is brutal enough as an academic, but when you add an Indigenous lens to the interactions, responses, and the lack of cultural awareness, ethics is frightening as an Indigenous academic. If universities want to engage in reconciliation and indigenization or decolonization, faculty and administration need to work harder on raising the cultural awareness and safety of their institutions and work with grassroots Indigenous organizations who are developing their own ethics boards to hold non-Indigenous researchers accountable for their activities in research projects.

The tokenization of Indigenous participants and Indigenous researchers themselves, is a stain on the relationship with research leads and their research staff. Inclusion means having a voice. It means not having to remain an intern for 10 years and it means having the ability to reach for the higher positions in any type of research project (and not just those that are based on Indigenous people). Our communities have highly educated people living within them, people who could contribute in standard practical ways as researchers themselves, or through very specialized ways based on their expertise. Given the opportunity when working with Indigenous communities, ask if there is anyone who has the knowledge or skills needed and hire them.

There were many lessons revealed to me throughout my engagement with the storytellers who participated in this project with me. Our stories are layered with knowledge and valuable input and deserve to be listened to multiple times for the information that went beyond the scope of this project that could lead to future research projects in areas such as: increasing the intersectional approaches to this framework through other Indigenous lenses.

On the advice of my Elders and several storytellers I felt it necessary to narrow the intersections to Mi'kmaw people in Mi'kma'ki and their various ways of identifying themselves through gender, lifestyle, location, and the extent of their worldviews. However, there are so many other Indigenous Nations and identities across the world who can use this framework and create a model that is specific to their own epistemologies, ontologies, axiologies, and methodologies, making it specific to their own lens in the Two-Eyed Seeing approach. The advice of my Elders extended to the eventual evolution of the model to an L'nu-specific model.

### ***5.5 Updated 7-Direction Medicine Wheel L'nu Research Model***

As I had stated at the beginning of this document, the model that I adapted and developed into a 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model underwent many changes. There was the evolution from a 4-direction medicine wheel to the 7-direction medicine wheel, which began with westernized concepts of the Indigenous Research Paradigm: epistemology, ontology, axiology, and methodology, to a version with the Mi'kmaw interpretations included, with translations provided by Elder Tom Christmas.

After consulting with other Elders the model was adapted once more with new translations that have been used by Elder and Educator, Albert Marshall of Eskasoni First Nation, who with his wife Murdena Marshall, coined the term Etuaptmunk (Two-Eyed Seeing). He provided additional translation for the terms epistemology, ontology, axiology and methodology. It is important to note that there are dialectical differences in the language between Mi'kmaw communities and I feel that it is important to include both in this document. A final model was designed for this thesis and is included on the following page (please see Figure 20).

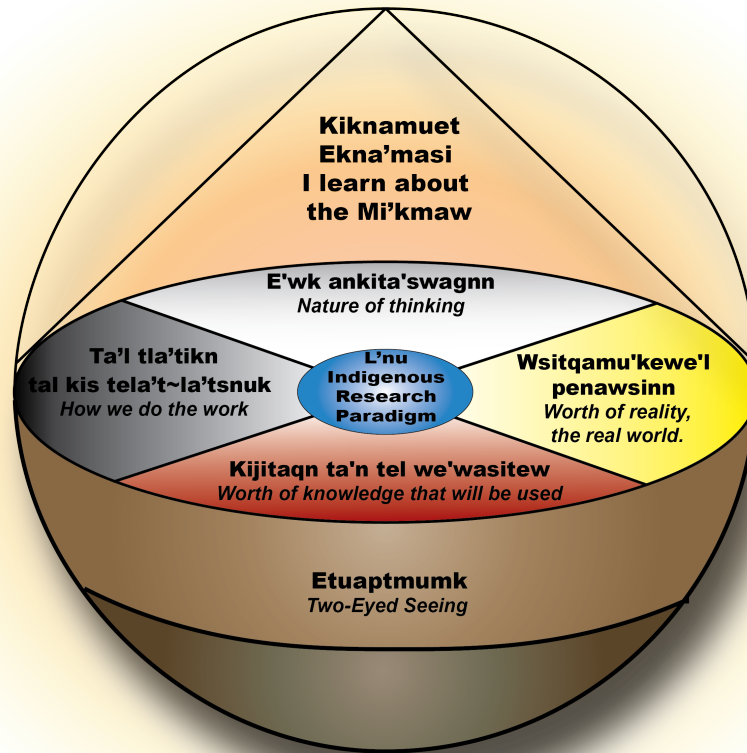


Figure 20 - 7-Direction L'nu Research Model (Translations provided by Elder, Albert Marshall)

Another important note pertains to question whether this model could be used by a Mi'kmaw person conducting research within a Mi'kmaw community. There are inherently many commonalities between Mi'kmaw people, however there are community-based differences depending on population and geographical location that could influence which engagement protocols that specific communities would like to adhere to. While some may determine that this model is not necessary and that the commonalities are enough to move forward without using a Two-Eyed Seeing method, I would suggest that it is respectful to make these initial inquiries. I would argue that if the research results are to be shared with western institutions that a Two-Eyed Seeing methodology may help with the translation of information from a Mi'kmaw ontological perspective to a western one.

### ***5.6 Conclusion***

The pandemic had impacts on every aspect of this thesis, including my protocols for engagement. However, with the help and guidance of my Elder, Debbie Eisen, I was able to get back on track.

Another aspect of this process that greatly impacted me was the ethics review process. I engaged with multiple ethics boards that viewed the research proposal through a Mi'kmaw lens, however the resulting approvals were not sufficient for the university. There is still a deep sense of ownership around the research process and if reconciliation and indigenization of the academic institution is to be actioned, there needs to be a larger conversation around how to collaboratively create ethics guidelines that are inclusive of multiple worldviews.

That said, it is important to stress how I found the academic ethics process systemically biased toward non-Indigenous, western methods. The process is brutal enough as an academic, but when you add an Indigenous lens to the interactions, responses, and the lack of cultural awareness, ethics is frightening as an Indigenous academic. If universities want to engage in reconciliation and indigenization or decolonization, faculty and administration, need to work harder on raising the cultural awareness and safety of their institutions and work with grassroots Indigenous organizations who are developing their own ethics boards to hold non-Indigenous researchers accountable for their activities in research projects.

I have picked up the talking stick that my grandfather made, and I have passed that talking stick, virtually, to storytellers from Mi'kma'ki, giving them a voice in the project, in the creation of the research model's design, and in the tool that will be distributed to the Mi'kmaq communities. I have re-told my Elder's stories as they related to this project and will continue to pass their teachings on to future generations as I embrace the responsibility that their imbued knowledge has given me.



I started this document as a metaphor for written stories, embracing the role of the protagonist, but as you've read, I was also the became my own antagonist. I have learned that the written word comes from the mind, but to truly relay my stories about this process I need to tell my story orally, from my heart. I feel that it is necessary to state, for future academics who read this paper: In the words of my grandmother, Rose Knockwood, "I pass this talking stick to you."

### ***5.7 Epilogue***

*I am picking up the talking stick one last time to reflect upon the past year and relay my story...*

*A year ago, Nova Scotia, and the world, shut down due to the fast-spreading Covid-19 virus. As I reflect back on the past year, I cannot deny that the pandemic had profound impacts on me and my progress with the completion of my master's degree. On April 1st my granddaughter was born, and her father couldn't attend the birth because he had gotten infected with Covid-19 and was quarantined as he recuperated for three months. So, I went instead and watched as my granddaughter was born unable to breathe because her cord was wrapped around her neck. My world stopped turning for three minutes as doctors worked on the baby and I reassured my daughter that she was going to be ok. Having a baby in the house while working on my thesis and having storytelling sessions led to some creative scheduling and a few humorous moments as participants could hear her in the house.*

*My proposal for my thesis was put on hold as I helped my daughter and the baby settle in and adjusted to working from home as the Adult Learning Program instructor at the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre. The fear of infection, especially with a newborn in the house, was overwhelming at times and it wasn't until I wanted to bleach the eggs before I brought them into the house from the grocery store, that I knew my anxiety and*

*stress levels were higher than they've ever been. While all of this was going on in my personal life, my academic life was whispering from behind the curtain to get back on track. But I didn't know how.*

*I didn't know how I could possibly engage with my Elders and other knowledge keepers in a respectful, Mi'kmaw way without violating the social distancing and no-contact measures the province had put into place. It wasn't until we reopened the offices at work, and I was able to speak to my Elder advisor on this project, Debbie Eisen in person – at a safe social distance with masks on – that I finally felt like I could write the section of the proposal that I had been putting off for so long, the methodology. I made adjustments, I found ways to work around the Covid-19 restrictions, and with the help of my thesis committee supervisors I finally managed to get the proposal submitted.*

*The ethics process was extremely stressful and the need for cultural safety within academic institutions was made glaringly obvious to me. I went through the entire gambit of emotional ups and downs while trying to reconcile my intentions with the university's systemic motivations and lack of inclusion. Upon reflection of my emotional responses to the process, I reminded myself that I was grounding myself in Two-Eyed Seeing, and not strictly an Indigenous methodology for the explicit purpose of addressing these exact types of situations, and once I remembered that important philosophical approach to this project, I was better able to meet the western standards of the ethics processes. However, I do firmly believe that changes need to be made to improve the relationships between Indigenous peoples and academia. There is a long history of positional superiority within academia, and we need to find the common grounds to approach these types of research projects from a position of equality and respect.*

*The timelines that I tried to meet throughout this process were impacted by so many things, both personal and institutional, but again, Covid-19's impacts on society in general were a constant reminder that we are living in a new reality now as we undergo*

*the changes necessary to keep our world, our Knowledge Holders, our language keepers, and ourselves safe and healthy, change is not always easy to undertake or accept. My mother used to tell me, “change is hard, even good change”. As I write this, I consider the changes that I underwent throughout this entire master’s program.*

*I found my voice. As a mature student in university, I had a deep sense of imposter syndrome and after a couple of months of uncertainty I finally spoke up in my classes, contributing to the discussion, using my mature-Mi’kmaw-grandmother-mother-working-student voice, I finally felt like I had a place in the class, in the university, and that I could make a difference in society if I could replace my insecurities with bravery. I’ve jumped out of airplanes as a skydiver, why did I find it so hard to be brave intellectually and culturally? I found my bravery in the people I surrounded myself with and their encouragement and mentorship empowered me to stand my ground, fight for an equal space, and bring to light the injustices and systemic biases that I saw around me.*

*This thesis has been a journey of growth, reflection, cultural and spiritual awakening, and I truly wish that another Indigenous student, researcher, or person reads it and picks up that talking stick to pass along the knowledge with the same sense of responsibility that I found through my story-acts and meaning making. I see this thesis as the beginning of something that could impact academia and Indigenous people everywhere in positive ways.*

*Now, I pass the talking stick to the next person.*

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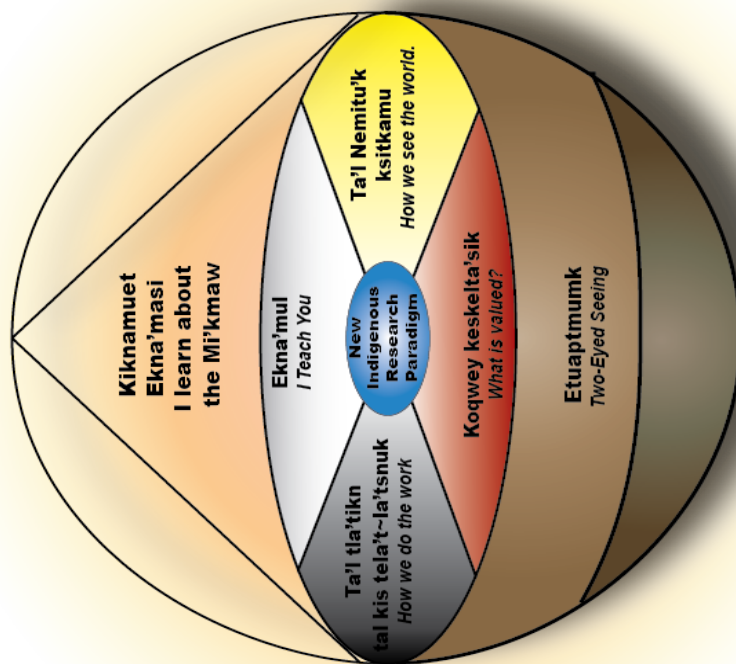
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## Appendices

### Appendix 1– 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model Tool

# Decolonizing Research With a New 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Indigenous Research Model



#### What is so special about this model?

To further reconciliation efforts within academia, a new research paradigm, using a Anishnaabeg 7-Direction Medicine Wheel as a framework, and Mi'kmaq culture as a cultural guide, will provide a further decolonization of research with and for Indigenous communities, organizations and individuals.

#### From a Mi'kmaq perspective:

Kiknamuet or Ekna'masi is the background research that those who wish to engage with Indigenous communities need to do prior to engagement.

Ekna'mul is the guidance of the Elders and knowledge keepers in the design of the research project that is to be undertaken. Their input will be essential throughout the entire project. True engagement means that their opinions and advice is essential to the entire process.

Ta'l nemitu'k ksitkamu is how we see the world around us. Culture, traditional knowledge, unique identities hold vital information in how we engage with researchers and the level of participation we can provide.

Kooqwey keskelta'sik is what we value about our culture, our identities, and our ways of knowing and being a part of our culture. They are the sacred gifts that the Creator has bestowed upon us, and provide us with our ethics, rights, privileges, and responsibilities.

Ta'l tla'tikn or tal kis tela't-la'tsnuk is how we do the work, our methodologies for culturally based research.

Etuaptmunk is the Two-Eyed Seeing way of approaching research projects using both an Indigenous lens and a western lens and finding the right combination of methods that will provide the research with the best way to approach the work through both Indigenous and western research methods.

The New Indigenous Research Paradigm is the 7-Direction Medicine Wheel Research Model. As all the elements of the wheel come together holistically and interweave all the cultural aspects, approaches and unique ways of being Indigenous into a research project, they converge at the centre of the model.

#### Using the Model:

##### From an Indigenous perspective:

- Identify what you want researchers to know about your community before they engage with you and create a one-page write-up on who they can contact to gather the background information they need to respect your protocols for engagement.
- Identify people in your community who have specialized expertise in specific areas and refer researchers to your experts when they want to engage in a research project.
- Identify the ways in which you want researchers to conduct their studies using Indigenous methods.

##### From a non-Indigenous researcher's perspective

- Do some background research prior to engaging with community by working with a local Indigenous person to identify the cultural values, and protocols for engagement based on the unique identities of the people you wish to work with.
- Learn how to approach a Two-Eyed Seeing methodology that respects both western and Indigenous methods for research and knowledge transfer, inclusively and give voice to the participants and Indigenous researchers you are working with.

*Appendix 2 – Meaning Making Approach for Story-acts*



*Figure 21-Meaning Making approach to the complex nature of story-act, and the interconnected means of making meaning through relationships between the spiritual, political, traditional, and contemporary ontologies of Kijipuktuk's urban-Indigenous community. (Adapted from Price, 2020, in press)*