



ETHICS IN INDIGENOUS RESEARCH WORKSHOP

16 MARCH 2018

SUMMARY NOTES

The Ethics in Indigenous Research Workshop was created as an opportunity for researchers at every stage in their career to participate in a day-long conversation about the processes of ethical research engagement with Indigenous individuals and communities. We sincerely hope that the day's event took a step towards productive and valuable long-term commitments to similar exchanges and, ultimately, transformative change.

At this inaugural Workshop, we featured keynote talks delivered by noted scholars in Indigenous research ethics, along with case-driven scenarios to foster stimulating engagement and conversation around pressing and challenging ethical issues and towards showcasing successful research relationships and best practices. Our aim was to create a safe space where diverse stakeholders could come together to think about, actively engage with, and work through thought-provoking ethical issues in diverse areas of Indigenous research. Our intent was to highlight both the challenges and successes of conducting research with Indigenous partners and within Indigenous contexts and to create and foster a productive and constructive learning environment.

The Research Ethics Workshop brought together Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, faculty, senior undergraduate, and graduate students to engage in meaningful conversations about the responsibilities of conducting ethical research in and with Indigenous communities, and the form(s) that this research might take within the context of a changing sociopolitical landscape.

We are committed to the highest standard of research ethics and accountability between Indigenous peoples and settlers in Canada. We take as a fundamental premise that the incorporation of Indigenous knowledges and values at every stage of the research process has greatly transformed the ways in which ethical research is being re-defined, re-articulated, regulated, and operationalized within academia. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) Calls to Action ushers in a new era of relationship-building and collaboration and we understand it to be our responsibility, as citizens, scholars, educators, and allies to learn how to build respectful, reciprocal, ethical, and sustainable research relationships with Indigenous colleagues and partnering communities.

Naomi Adelson & Christianne Stephens, co-organizers

Thank you to York University students Fariyah Ali, Neda Maki, and Caryl Patrick for preparing the following summary notes.

Morning Session

The workshop began with an introductory table exercise to come up with words to best describe why people were attending the workshop. The key words selected were:

- Responsibility
- Reciprocity
- Understanding
- Hopeful
- Trustworthy
- Respect
- Futurity
- Value
- Contribution
- Learning
- Curiosity
- Listening



Guest Knowledge Keeper, Amy Desjarlais offered prayers and opening words to begin the workshop day. Participants were introduced to teachings about land acknowledgements, the sacredness of tobacco, and honouring the ancestors. Amy provided an important context for understanding the relational and spiritual elements which underlie Indigenous worldviews and perspectives forging ethical research relationships.

We need many hands working together to develop ethical, equitable, sustainable research partnerships and to create awareness of issues.

Amy Desjarlais

For more information about Amy Desjarlais and her work, please see

<https://earthtalker.wordpress.com/about/about-amy/>

Research, Truth, and Reconciliation

Deborah McGregor © 2018



- Goal: to think about research and ethics together; ethics should not be an afterthought
- Research is supposed to give insight into truth, and enable us to do that
- Considering colonization: we have a long way to go in terms of the way we do research
- Cultural genocide- the TRC report focuses on the truth of

residential schools and Canadian history

- The Problem: Indigenous People are often looked at as the problem, which is problematic. Indigenous issues are characterized in a way that depicts Indigenous peoples as broken and questions are framed around how to 'put them back together' again, a problem to be solved
- The Ivory tower experts often dictate framing of problems and priorities; a power imbalance
- *Inaction is a form of action*: It is unethical for a researcher to not take action when we know something is wrong
- If you don't ask the right questions, you won't get the right answers

Canadian Problem: asking the right questions

- Cultural genocide: getting rid of 'Indian Problem' by getting rid of the Indian
- Existing knowledge which represented Indigenous People as inferior, savage, and in need of civilization
- Everything we know must be called into question

- There was often a political agenda for the research that took place; TRC & Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) pointed this out

Research is not neutral

- The status quo is unacceptable
- Disparity in research exists: between researcher and the research, which puts additional pressures/burdens on Indigenous communities
- Universities stand on Indigenous lands and benefit from the exploitation of those lands and their associated knowledge. Universities are publicly funded institutions and thus have obligations to Indigenous communities
- In communities, no one oversees research, unlike universities
- "Aboriginal Research" (as defined by the Tri-Council) is NOT the same as Indigenous research; paradigms are fundamentally different (the latter is based on Indigenous worldviews, ontology and epistemologies)
- Inequities exist in the bigger picture: often researchers are left to manage on their own

What is Reconciliation?

- The TRC defines 'reconciliation' as an "ongoing process of establishing and maintaining respectful relationships"; Reconciliation is a VERB
- Elder Crowshoe explains: "As human beings resolve problems among themselves but continue to destroy the natural world, then reconciliation remains incomplete" (quoted in: *Honouring the Truth, Reconciling the Future*, 2015).

Reconciliation is a verb.
Deborah McGregor

What Reconciliation is Not

- The duty to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate is part of a process of fair dealing and reconciliation that begins with the assertion of sovereignty by the Crown and continues

beyond formal claims resolution through to the application and implementation of Treaties

- The inherent right of self-government does not include a right of sovereignty in the international law sense
- Reconciliation can look different within/for different Indigenous groups; there is diversity

Indigenous Knowledge Systems: Responsibility & Knowledge

- Indigenous Peoples are whole societies, not subject matter
- There is a problem with how knowledge systems and cultures are characterized by the academy
- Right Question: how do we make research relevant to Indigenous societies and people? How do we construct these ideas appropriately and ask the right questions?
- Indigenous knowledge systems go beyond the human component; academia has a hard time with this

Colonial Research

- Charles Menzies calls for researchers “to stop using Indigenous peoples as a laboratory to test non-Indigenous theories and methods” (2013: 187)
- Dr. Ian Mosby Administering Colonial Science: Nutrition Research and Human Medical Experimentation in Aboriginal Communities and Residential Schools, 1942-1952 (2013)
- Climate Change Research: If research doesn’t consider colonialism, it means that it’s perpetuating colonialism! Comes through when policies don’t recognize colonial history; puts additional pressure on Indigenous People; to ‘extract’ traditional knowledge is problematic; we must be accountable—even in science

Decolonizing Research

- Colonized research that continues to marginalize Indigenous peoples, epistemology and knowledges within research processes reproduces colonialism; colonial structures are

ongoing; not necessarily a linear process and could be circular

- Indigenous research: based on Indigenous worldview and Indigenous knowledge, and responds to Indigenous needs and inquiries
- We must think of research differently; but this doesn’t necessarily exclude non-Indigenous people
- Decolonizing research- involves creating space where Indigenous research could emerge. It entails asking tough questions, based on Indigenous worldviews and knowledge
- Indigenous research is based on responsibilities and accountability. It is not enough to just cite something
- Indigenous Models of Research: Co-existence (Treaty of Niagara 1764)
- Some Indigenous communities are coming up with their own research protocols, and you need to account for them when engaging in research in specific communities

Indigenous Research

- Drawing on Indigenous governance, law, knowledge and protocols
- Responsibilities
- Accountability
- Beyond the human dimension
- Beyond human agency
- If Indigenous communities don’t want the research, it won’t happen

Indigenous Models of Research Co-Existence

- How do these responsibilities come out in research?
- A lot of Indigenous communities are developing their own research ethics protocols

Seven Original/Grandfather Teachings- GEAR

- Wisdom
- Love: how will your research show love for future generations?
- Respect
- Bravery

- Honesty
- Humility
- Truth

Some Ethical Considerations

- Trauma informed research is sensitive to who tells the story and what stories are told
- Accountability is important (for all researchers), moral/ethical (personal, professional) dimensions need to be considered. Researchers need to ask if they would be comfortable answering specific questions, they need to determine what constitutes an ethical context for research, issues of consent (at multiple levels - from the community and within the community and the ways you attain that). Trauma-informed research must be built on compassion
- Reciprocity is not well understood and inequities exist here as well because if research was truly reciprocal we would see a lot of material changes - other people are benefiting more than the communities (what is truly reciprocal? What about monetary considerations?)
- Researchers need to ask: *what is my moral compass?*
- Researchers need to be willing to put themselves in the participants'/community's positions
- Hard to teach, not usually included in training
- Who is responsible for the conduct of ethical research? What is the researcher's responsibility? What should a researcher do if they are working in an unethical context?
- The issue of consent is important at multiple levels and at multiple points in time. Just because you have consent of community leadership/approval from REB doesn't necessarily mean the people consent

Reconciliation Research

*How can reconciliation research transform society?
What does Indigenous reconciliation look like?*

- To approach research within a reconciliation framework given current perpetuation of colonialism (embedded, structural)
- The TRC has called for "reconciliation research" as a way to address the willful ignorance non-

Indigenous society continues to maintain about Indigenous Peoples

- There has been very little if any research to understand what "Indigenous reconciliation" really looks like
- How have Research Institutions responded?
- More importantly: how have Indigenous communities, organizations and peoples responded?

What is the Difference between Aboriginal and Indigenous Research?

- Aboriginal research is defined by the Tri-Council and tends to get funded – it adheres to and perpetuates traditional academic 'theories'
- Aboriginal research is western worldviews of Indigenous people applied to Indigenous peoples
- Indigenous research is knowledge systems coming from Indigenous cosmo-visions about Indigenous communities

Principles (10 exist but D.M. highlights 2)

- The perspectives and understandings of Indigenous Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers of the ethics, concepts, and practices of reconciliation are vital to long-term reconciliation
- Supporting Indigenous Peoples' cultural revitalization and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems, oral histories, laws, protocols, and connections to the land into the reconciliation process are essential

Challenges

- We need to ask fundamentally different questions
- Enable structural, systemic, and institutional change
- Forging Nation to Nation relationships is important
- Readiness: Are people ready to hear Indigenous stories or truths? Are they ready for the responsibility?
- The “truth” can be scary and can make people uncomfortable
- The researcher should respond to Indigenous societies, not seek to extract knowledge/data
- MOUs (Memorandum of Understanding) with communities can be helpful in establishing respectful relationships
- When communities are reluctant, it’s often (inappropriately) viewed as uncooperative; a community can say “no”
- We should consider what communities think of US, the researchers
- Researchers should work toward empowering Indigenous People to tell their own stories; addressing/dismantling power dynamic between researched & researcher; not just focusing on ‘how can I tell the stories of others?’
- Indigenous research engages with Indigenous ways of thinking vs. Aboriginal research, which is with Indigenous People

For more information about Deborah McGregor and her work, please see

<https://www.osgoode.yorku.ca/faculty-and-staff/mcgregor-deborah/>

<http://ireworkshop.laps.yorku.ca/files/2018/01/McGregor-2017.pdf>

Workshop Table Activity 1: How do we build ethical and effective research relationships?

1. What does decolonizing research look like?

- What counts as research?
- A lot of unlearning needs to happen



- Positionality is imperative
- Naming colonizing forces
- Accept refusal, acknowledging how to be reflexive
- Create space and build opportunities for Indigenous research
- Address structural change
- Timelines institutions impose is very problematic (work against researchers seeking to build relationships)
- Beginning with self-reflection and defining moral compass and consistently coming back to this
- Acknowledging your own limitations and the limitations of the community
- Engaging in community-centered and public education projects- to better the community
- Being honest and forthright: Admitting and acknowledging failure
- Building relationships with the community
- Institutions- need to provide funding and opportunities to Indigenous scholars and research collaborators. Institutions need to start valuing it
- Hiring practices- institutional support
- Creating space with Indigenous leadership of research- build capacity
- Need to shift relationships and have time to do that (confined in the timeframes imposed by funders and institutions)
- Creating space- getting to know someone (researchers, students-academic side) and

shining the light on them- allowing them to be brought up

- Ethical relationships need to include Indigenous ways of understanding
- Come up with mechanisms to share that knowledge
- Writing style- Being mindful of Western conventions of writing (asking: what does writing look like?) Being open to other ways of writing: How Indigenous writers use no punctuation or instead of summarizing data they would just insert the whole story
- Giving opportunity for co-publication with Indigenous scholars and research collaborators (creating opportunities to create partnerships)

2. What are the criteria of being a good ally?

- Ongoing
- Not taking up space that Indigenous people need to take up
- Don't pick and choose your causes
- Being flexible in changing your cause
- Aligning your research with a greater cause
- Criteria should be identified by Indigenous people
- Reflexive of our (researcher's) positionality
- Ally is not self-appointed; the community will tell you if they want you to take on this role
- Indigenous people are allies to others when in different territories
- Recognizing Indigenous rights and history
- Where does power and/or privilege lie?
- Integrity - defined by the community and necessary throughout the process
- Our role is to speak up, but not to take up the space
- Self-reflection - why are we doing this research to begin with?
- Mistakes will be made, acknowledge them
- Don't label non-Indigenous people as experts
- What not to do: tokenism - there is a theme to approach or "include" Indigenous peoples for "optics", or for numbers
- Have other people assume that an Indigenous person is an expert on a topic

3. How do settler researchers engage in Indigenous research relationships?

- A sense of privilege and/or power needs to be dealt with
- Relationships are central in research
- Recognize that research is not starting from a neutral place
- Reflect on positionality: implications?
- Beyond the individual researcher, extends to the university
- Be open and willing to unlearn
- Listen
- Look for mentors beyond our constraints (institutions)
- Reciprocity of the research plan
- Data ownership in and of itself is very colonial
- Research is an ongoing process
- Invitations from community needs to be made
- Community needs to be involved, not exploited
- Settlers need to engage in research that is meaningful
- Being kind, generous, humble and respectful
- Sharing the burden and benefits
- Benefit of the research - relationships do not end when you leave community/research ends
- Safe spaces- create an authentic research relationship
- Building honest and trustworthy relationships
- Write research in a way that is accessible to people (plain language summaries)
- Being conscious of the community itself and ways in which research could be best delivered
- Go to the community before you go to the REB - a lot of your research will come after your consultation
- REB process itself is very colonizing

4. How do we address inequities or silences in the research setting?

- Facilitate Indigenous research
- Provide opportunities/support Elders on campus
- Bridge the community and university by non-Indigenous students
- Be aware of any power imbalances
- Power differences within the community itself

- Inherent right to self-determination is a global conversation. Indigenous people are asserting their right to self-determination
- Self-determination: balancing of power, identity and benefit
- Ethics submission: Whether we are Indigenous or not, we have the responsibility to stand up to ethics boards if the process is not right
- Ethics is not just about paper or process
- We need to have authentic and transparent relationships
- What are you giving back to the community while you're elevating your career and benefitting from the research outcomes?
- All of my relations is part of my research and all of my research is part of my relations

Afternoon Session



From Policies to Actions: Emerging Solutions in Promoting and Practicing Ethical Research with Indigenous Peoples

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- What do researchers really mean by partnerships?
- Two-eyed seeing: gift of seeing things from multiple perspectives; incorporating Indigenous and non-Indigenous views
- Institutions: People are not encouraged to do things together; pedagogy can be very abstract and theoretical, not based on activities
- There are many ways of Indigenous understanding
- Can't talk about research ethics without talking about governance and self-determination
- Policies are based on geographical belonging and on cultural belonging: what happens in the space between the two?

***All of my relations is part of my research,
and all of my research is part of my relations.***
Julie Bull

- "We want to be at the table not just on the menu"- Jeff Reading (Indigenous scholar)
- We must understand the concept of **ethical space** (see: Willie Ermine, "The Ethical Space of Engagement" Indigenous Law J, 2007)
- Ethics comes before methods, during and after methods- it's embedded throughout despite what we are taught in school- It's the process that you go through
- What is the entire risks and benefits on your research? Consider how you conduct or disseminate the research. Could it be harmful?
- We all have a responsibility to look for guidance in research ethics area- the information is there, you just need to find it
- An essential read: Chapter 9 of the TCPS
- It's all about the relationships
- RCAP "renewed" relationship
- Actions must match our words
- Indigenous communities, REB, Researchers and funders-> integral relationship between these bodies
- REB "GPS"- Guiding Principles and Strategies because there isn't just one way. The following are the building blocks to foster a good relationship (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991):

1. Respect
 2. Relevance
 3. Reciprocity
 4. Responsibility
- Consent in research is ongoing
 - Your institution doesn't have the right to say whether your research is ethical for your community
 - Consultation, communication, consent, and cooperation = collaboration
 - Grassroots voices are getting louder: the motto: "nothing about us without us" holds true
 - Don't reinvent the wheel - build on existing research

Consent in research is ongoing.
Julie Bull

For more information on Julie Bull and her work, please see

- <http://www.juliebull.net/about-me>
- <http://ireworkshop.laps.yorku.ca/files/2018/01/Julie-Bull-Publication-2010.pdf>
- http://www.nunatukavut.ca/home/files/pg/guide_for_researchers.pdf
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvKq4SI_DvI

Workshop Table Activity #2: What is valuable research?

1. What does valuable mean?

- Useful contribution, meaningful, needed
 - Value needed in relation to social activity
 - Is completed and finished research more valuable than finished research?
 - Valuable research can promote justice, reconciliation
 - Desired by the community
 - Helps us see things in a new way
 - Something that makes a change
 - What is behind value? Walking the talk or capitalist value?
 - What is the intention of what we want to do?
- Is research just *re-searching* for something that is already known?
 - Knowledge is a gift but not yours to keep- it must be passed on
 - Competitive vs. collaborative research
 - Ethics is not being defined broadly enough
 - Ethical research practices can be more limited within the postsecondary system- pushing it out so the corporate world has more accountability of these issues
 - Research ethics is still being seen somewhat through a Western lens- it proceeds in a linear process and doesn't really allow for an iterative process
 - Ethics protocol allow for feedback at the wrong place in the research process
 - Lots of research that occurs that is not reviewed by anybody (because Tri-Council Policy Statement [TCPS] is only for those universities that have a MOU)
 - What is **not** valuable research as opposed to what is? Framing this question differently
 - Value as currency and as exchange- what is the currency and who is going to profit from the research? That is dependent on the place
 - Context is important
 - Research that helps build capacity and is accountable- support leadership
 - The idea that research should lead to community revitalization and self-determination
 - Sometimes you can uphold values in the peer-review process
 - Research process in and of itself is flawed
 - Responds to needs and priorities- dependent on the community/context
 - The context of value can be considered an exploitative term
 - Value of research is often times dependent on funding priorities and political agencies
 - Value is generated by collaboration
 - Value is added when research is translated into action and impact
 - Working with communities can be valuable when there's a reciprocal relationship
 - Action research- Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach
 - Who holds research funds? More value when community holds this

- Compensation- how to compensate elders, knowledge holders or those that participate in the research
- Reporting research- open access
- Schools still have outlines to only use peer-review journals but a lot of knowledge can be gathered through different avenues- elders, land camps, grey literature etc.
- Funding agencies have specific priority areas and we need to appease to these areas in order to get funds
- Ethics extend to animal life- in the Western model, ethics is limited to human life
- Ability to respond to quick timelines based on the community deadlines and needs
- Important to recognize the power dynamics of those who occupy positions of power and prestige but who continue to hold antiquated and biased views of Indigenous peoples (the proverbial “old dinosaurs”)
- CBC Rosanna Deerchild- talks a lot about the issues we talked today

2. How is value calibrated within the multiple frameworks of research ethics boards, academic expectations and markers of success, timeframes, community needs and/or expectations?

- We have no “equation” for ethics or ethical conduct
- Ongoing conversation, always changing
- The first rule is “cause no harm”
- Most research boards don’t evaluate whether research is valuable
- We have to have ‘letters’ behind our names (academic credentials) in order to access the bigger pockets of money
- Funding is limited within academia
- Communities should formulate the research proposals and send them to universities, and universities can send the researchers out
- If something is a value to community (e.g. policy report that had impact at the government level) why would that not be considered equal to a standard thesis or other form of “academic” writing?
- Really thinking of restructuring the institution
- The value would be determined based on the impact on the community
- Institutional and structural barriers of the institution- the modes of the evaluation, time constraints that

really impact the process of conducting ethical research

- When identifying a research question to a community, maybe they can articulate the research question in a very different way
- Fitting your research into an ethical process can be very challenging but at the same time it can be positive because it makes you think of things you may not have thought about
- Provides you with a platform to engage (networks and resources to actually engage with the work/community)
- REB process is flawed and linear- it is unethical to consult with people regarding your methods before your ethics approval to work with Indigenous people is approved? Very contradictory and ironic
- Impact agencies have on the community relationship
- People with lived experience should be involved
- Influence of political situations on how research can happen
- Intellectual property- giving authorship and credit when it’s due. Give community the opportunity to be an author or co-publish
- Our job is not to heal, but rather to provide space to allow healing

Acknowledgements

Thank you again to all the participants! Your evaluations and feedback were extremely helpful. We will endeavour to incorporate your suggestions in any future workshops.

This workshop was funded by York University's Provost's Indigenizing the Academy Initiative, the Vice President Research and Innovation events fund, Faculty of Liberal Arts & Professional Studies research events fund, and the Department of Anthropology.

Lunch was catered by Nish Dish.

Thank you to the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto for the use of the space and all the support provided for this event.

For workshop information and resources, please see

<http://ireworkshop.laps.yorku.ca/>

<http://ireworkshop.laps.yorku.ca/ethics-research-catalogue/>

<http://yfile.news.yorku.ca/2018/05/16/ethics-workshop-calls-for-transforming-research-with-indigenous-knowledge>

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/ethics-indigenous-research-workshop-key-take-away-points-crawford/>

For information on York University's Guidelines for research with Indigenous Peoples, please see

<http://research.info.yorku.ca/guidelines-for-research-involving-aboriginalindigenous-peoples>

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Left to Right: Deborah McGregor, Naomi Adelson, Amy Desjarlais, Christianne Stephens, Julie Bull