



Prepared for the

## **School Food Development Project (SFDP)**

University of Saskatchewan

# **Practicing Community Wellness in re-Search**

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Prepared by

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## Intro to the Author

Dënë Cheecham-Uhrich is from Dënësulinë Treaty 8 Territory, Clearwater River Dënë Nation - a Dënë and Métis community in the Northern Saskatchewan boreal forest. Dënë has a Bachelor of Arts in Indigenous Studies with master level experience in advanced hydrology and planetary health. She is an independent Treaty 8 Territory consultant for collaborative planetary health research and acted as Indigenous Advisor to the School Food Development Project.



*Sampling in Cambridge Bay, Nunavut. August 2022.*

*Find Dënë's detailed bio on page 21.*

## Objective

To understand the intrinsic importance of cultural safety, competence and compassion to appropriately practice decolonial research ways in Indigenous communities.

## Goal

Indigenous knowledge, values, experiences and health challenges lack voice and equitable action in holistic wellbeing strategies, solutions and policy. The fundamental goal is to shift the research paradigm to transform how researchers from all disciplines interact, engage and connect with Indigenous communities to successfully achieve relational sustainability.

## Solution

To clearly outline community re-search communication, protocol and guideline framework to confront the sometimes-conflicting connotations attached to research to help strengthen, support and form robust

partnerships between communities and researchers.

## Project Design

To visit our relations (we are all relatives) and communities, initiating constructive research and culturally placed-based inclusive dialogue. The framework will draw from community conversations, shared knowledge and lived experiences. Marsi Cho/Kinanâskomitin/ Maarsii/Koana and gratitude to all community members and Elders for gifting their time, expertise, lived experiences and passion to help heal and reconcile our nations.





Photo Credit: Mario Mendez on Unsplash

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## 1.0 Rationale

Indigenous axiology and knowledge mobilization are now considered timely and compelling in research to help lead in protecting our planet's health and wellbeing. Although, Indigenous intelligence, values, principles, relationships, and skills have been respected and honoured within Indigenous cultures since time immemorial. It is important to observe the disconnection of the power imbalance in knowledge systems and the cultural realities to understand Indigenous peoples fight for voice, reciprocity and equitable action in community research, management, strategy and policy framework. It is also equally important to acknowledge Turtle Island's growing strength to break binary thinking and transform our nation's systems of thinking to biocentric and decolonial practice and mindfulness.

The colonization of Indigenous peoples began between the late 1500s-1800s by European powers but the dangerous misconception that colonialism is 'something of the past', has allowed neo-colonialism to cultivate. Colonialism is still very well and alive, through "hidden" strategy, careful practice and embedded in our systems. The impacts and consequences continue to destructively disrupt Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and pedagogies. In Canada, the founding forms of forced assimilation practices and policies that displaced and eradicated Indigenous peoples' innate relationships to culture, family, community, land, food, traditional leadership and autonomy include the following: (1) First Contact 1500s, (2) The Royal Proclamation 1763, (3) Treaties and Growing Colonies 1763-1862, and (4) Development of the Indian Act 1820-1927 (First Nations in Canada, Government of Canada, 2017). Their inhuman tactics and invasive dominance led to control and power over Indigenous peoples, creating artificial boundaries and division of nations. Canada's current government and policy systems are working toward truth and reconciliation to honour Indigenous peoples' experiences, educate Canadians on the realities of Canada's history and take accountability for the intergenerational trauma it continues to carry for Indigenous peoples.

Indigenous communities inevitably exemplify the raw and real implications of colonialism. The odious systems of forced assimilation and deep colonial exploitations has been the driving catalyst for mistrust, skepticism, and hesitancy toward participating in research and working with researchers outside of Indigenous communities and with

researchers that struggle to radiate community compassion, humility, and integrity. Creating an outline for community research communication, protocol, and a guiding framework to confront these conflicting connotations is necessary to help strengthen, support and form robust partnerships between communities and researchers.

## 2.0 Defining Community Language, Terminology and Worldviews

Educating and defining the terminology developed to entrench power and control is vital in leading to effective and culturally appropriate research ways to help solve our common health and wellbeing challenges. There is value in embracing a unified understanding which accepts and validates humanity’s knowledge of the natural word based within their diverse languages and worldviews.

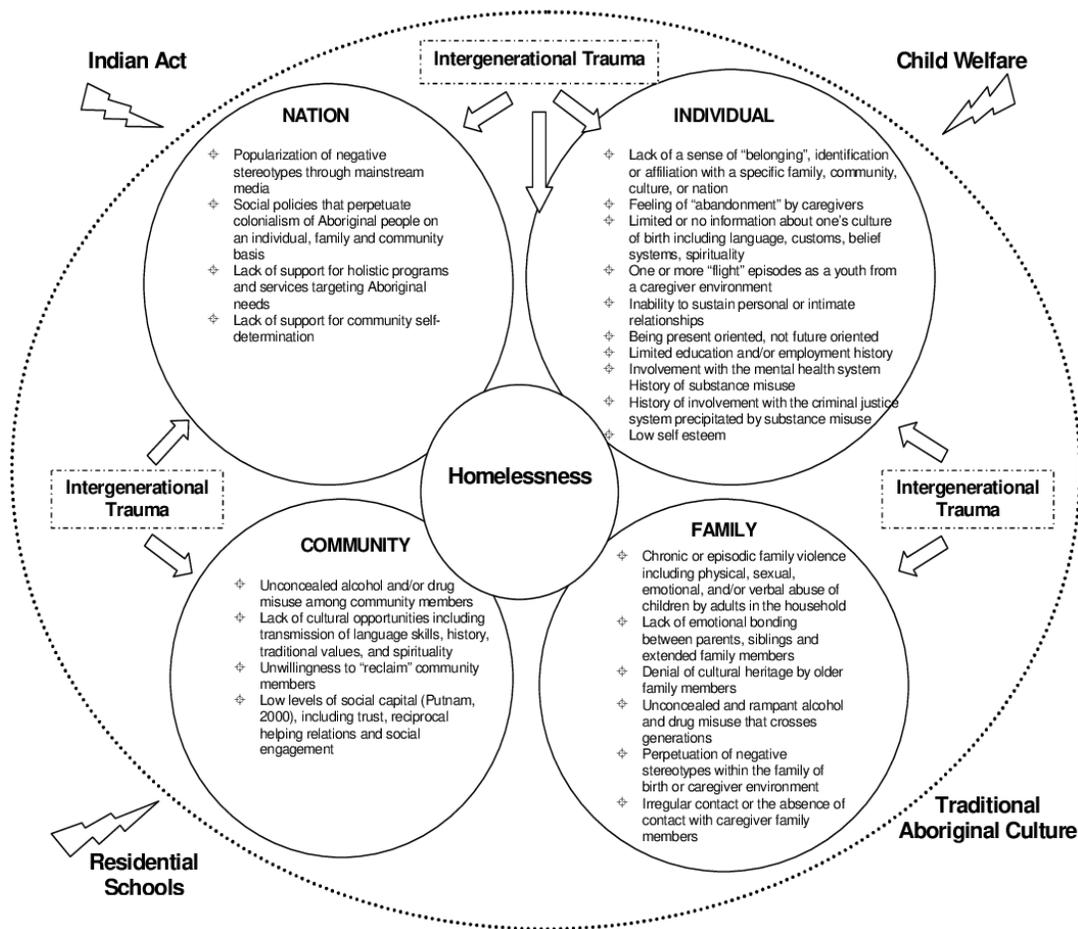


Figure 3, Intergenerational Trauma Model. Photo credit: Menzies, P. 2007 Journal of Native Studies [online] Semantic Scholar

The term *Indigenous* is “self-selected by Indigenous peoples globally that refers to land-based peoples with long-standing relationships and/or rights regarding a particular place” (Baker, 2019). *Colonialism* is “a process where; through physical, financial, and psychological forms of violence; one nation or group becomes dominant over another, often including the removal of the oppressed group from traditional lands and lifestyles” (Baker, 2019). The term *stakeholders*, when referring to Indigenous community members that are affected and/or impacted by government and policy decisions is a disingenuous and isolated term. It holds no humanistic quality or true acknowledgement and/or involvement of the effects and impacts Indigenous community members experience. Therefore, *community partners* are the appropriate and respectful term, when referring to the affected and/or impacted Indigenous communities. *Neo-colonialism* is “the ongoing practice of ‘internal colonialism’” (Lacchin, 2015). The “subtle propagation of socio-economic and political activity by former colonial rulers aimed at reinforcing capitalism, neo-liberal globalization, and cultural subjugation of their former colonies” (Afsi, 2017). *Assimilation* refers to “the process whereby one group or individual’s cultural is absorbed into another, creating one single cultural entity, giving up distinct group or individual identity – killing the Indian in the child” (Facing History & Ourselves, 2019). *Intergenerational trauma* is “trauma that is passed down behaviourally to the next generation” (Menzies, 2010). *Decolonization* is “a process through which people become aware of and disrupt oppressive ideas and practices associated with colonial thinking and actions (e.g., the notion that Western knowledge is superior to other forms of

knowledge)” (Baker, 2019). *Indigenization* is the “processes through which Indigenous peoples and knowledges are respected and drawn upon to shape contemporary policies and practices” (Baker, 2019). *Reconciliation* is the “processes through which healthy relationships are built between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, with the aim of healing from past oppressions and building a more equitable future” (Baker, 2019). *Relational sustainability* is to “sustain relations with valued others – the fundamental schema by which many Indigenous peoples conceive their relations with other natural forms” (Natcher, 2019). *Binary thinking* is the belief of superior versus inferior cultures and races (Chiefcalf, 2017). *Indigenous axiology* refers to “values, ethics and principals that are embedded in Indigenous knowledge” (Chiefcalf, 2017). *Indigenous epistemology* is “how knowledge



can be known" (Chiefcalf, 2017), *Indigenous ontology* is "the belief in the nature of reality, your way of being – what you believe is real in the world" (Wilson, 2001) and *Indigenous pedagogy* is "how knowledge can be taught" (Chiefcalf, 2017). *Indigenous kinships* are "recognized as fundamentally different from western genealogical systems, encompassing complex relationships with place, with the land (earth, waterways, sky), and the more-than-human (animal, plant and spirit) which express culturally specific gendered obligations and laws, or forms of Indigenous spiritual governance" (Dudgeon & Bray, 2019). *Biocentrism* is understanding "nature and humans are all interconnected" (Weber, 2018).

The levels of Indigenous knowledge lifeforces are diverse and specific to their region. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) is "a holistic, cumulative and dynamic body of inclusive knowledge, practice and belief based on observation and experience that is passed down through generations by cultural transmission" (Natcher, 2019). Local ecological knowledge (LEK) is quite like TEK, understanding it is deeply connected to place and knowledge "acquired through experience and observation" (Natcher, 2019) but does not require "multi-generational accumulation of knowledge or that the population be Indigenous" (Natcher, 2019). LEK is accessed over a generous amount of time spent, interacting and connecting with a local environment. Indigenous knowledge is the "cultural traditions, values, beliefs, worldviews and the product of Indigenous peoples direct experience of the workings of nature and its relationship with the social world" (Natcher, 2019).

TEK and LEK include the 3 following systems which describe how knowledge is culturally transmitted and accessed: common, shared and specialized knowledge. Common knowledge is attained by most people in a community (ie. almost everyone knows how to clean a fish), shared knowledge is carried by many but not all community members (ie. villagers who know how to construct traditional fishing weirs) and specialized knowledge, is carried by very few community members who have been specially selected by an elder and/or local community leader (Natcher, 2019). The elder/local community leader shares his/her traditional teachings and experiences, sustaining the cultural practices and traditional status (ie. limited few become a medicine man/woman and/or healer) (Natcher, 2019).

In the context of TEK and LEK, the following definitions of *cultural safety*, *humility*, *compassion*, and *academic integrity* is an aligned extension of *community safety*, *humility*, *compassion*, and *integrity* and can be applied interchangeably. The Northern Health Organization (NHO) discusses cultural safety as "supporting increased cultural competency and safety" and is achieved "when people of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds feel respected and safe from discrimination" (2023). Cultural humility is defined as "a lifelong journey of self-reflection and learning. It involves listening without judgement and being open to learning from and about others. It involves learning about our own culture and our biases. Cultural humility is a building block for cultural safety. It is an overarching principle that is threaded through our learning and acts as the process by which change can occur." (The Northern Health Organization, 2023).

The 'Greater Good Science Center' at the University of California, Berkeley defines the literal meaning of compassion as "to suffer together...the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another's suffering and feel motivated to relieve that suffering" (2023). Scientists have successfully mapped the biological grounding of compassion and discovered "when we feel compassion our heart rate slows down, we secrete the bonding hormone oxytocin and regions of the brain link to empathy, caregiving and feelings of pleasure light up, wanting to approach and care for other people". Their studies identified remarkable holistic health benefits when practicing compassion. Some include the growth and improvement of health, well-being and relationships, lower stress hormones and the ability to be 'resilient in the face of others' suffering' which in turn helps combat inequalities (2023).

The simplistic definition of integrity is to show people your true heart and present your character, this way people or rather community will know they can trust you. From personal experience working in Indigenous communities, this is crucial in building all relationships. The academic definition of integrity is a commitment to 6 fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage. In "Re-Defining Academic Integrity: Embracing Indigenous Truths" Cree and Métis authors Yvonne Pratt and Keeta Gladue explore the colonial tones associated with narrow definitions and practices of academic integrity; and how fundamental it is to capture the re-defining of academic integrity through Indigenous perspectives.

Academic integrity is generated through the Indigenous "holistic truths and the reality of our interconnectedness" (Pratt & Gladue, pg. 116, 2022) and is redefined using the three core principles of relationality, reciprocity, and respect (Pratt & Gladue, pg. 116, 2022). In doing so, the spaces of re-learning and sharing 'empowers learners and researchers to take positive risks and move into shared ethical spaces of knowledge creation' (Pratt & Gladue, pg. 116, 2022). Academic integrity defined through relationality discusses how "relationships serve as the connective tissue of the living organisms that are our societies, communities and the universe; it is good relations that allow us to function in a healthy, whole and undivided way" (Pratt & Gladue, pg. 117, 2022), to help us move beyond our individual ambitions and into conscious community care spaces. Academic integrity defined through respect is understanding "the underpinning of the communities' relationships is respect" (Pratt & Gladue, pg. 117, 2022) and "the principle of respect is one that resides at the heart of reciprocity" (Pratt & Gladue, pg. 118, 2022).



### 3.0 Indigenous Intergenerational Food Relationships

A focus on Indigenous intergenerational food relationships will help the 'Exploring Universal School Food Programs and Practices with Indigenous Communities' project. To understand the origins and depths of Indigenous intergenerational food relationships one must understand the explicit purpose and practices of what the government of Canada refers to as residential "schools".

In respect to and at the request of residential "school" members that have passed away and residential "school" survivors, residential "schools" will be referred to as 'residential institutions' moving forward.



Figure 4, the Kamloops Indian Residential Institution in 1937. Photo credit: National Center for Truth and Reconciliation.

Residential institution survivors have expressed and shared their experiences in both text and personal storytelling, that schools should be second homes and safe learning spaces for students to become educated, successful, and proud individuals (oral knowledge transmission, 2012-2023). This was never the colonial intention for residential "schools" and most survivors feel enlightened to take ownership of their stories and enforce a narrative that holds accountability and truth (oral knowledge transmission, 2012-2023).

In 1884, amendments to the Indian Act, 1876 adopted and ratified the doctrine of residential institutions. The government of Canada financially funded residential institutions that were led by the Roman Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and United churches (Restoule, 2013). In some cases, residential institutions were funded and led by provincial governments or other religions. In 1920, it became mandatory for every Indigenous child aged seven to sixteen to attend residential institutions and by 1933 legal custody of Indigenous parents' children were ripped away, leaving legal guardianship of their children to the "principals" without choice (Restoule, 2013).

The recorded experiences of children that attended these institutions were extremely traumatic and painful. In the 'Overview of the Indian Residential School System' written by the Union of Ontario Indians, details the following assimilation practices:

- (1) forbidden to speak their Indigenous languages
- (2) required to speak English or French
- (3) required to adopt religious denomination of the school
- (3) forced style of

*prayer consistent with school denomination (4) forced haircut, or shaved head (5) use of toxic chemical to clean children's hair and skin (6) forced to wear uniform as designed by the school (7) forced to shower, no access to bath tubs (8) lack of nutritious diet (9) insufficient quantities of food (10) served spoiled food (11) segregation based on gender: brothers and sisters no contact (12) sexual assault (13) forced abortions (14) electrical shock (15) force-feeding of own vomit when sick (16) exposure to freezing outside temperatures with improper clothing (17) withholding of medical attention (18) exposure to contagious illness: students with tuberculosis not segregated (19) forced labour in unsafe work environments (20) vilification of cultural traditions (21) use of racist language to address students, and (22) withholding presents and letters from family (pgs. 5-6, 2013).*

In 1942 to 1952 nutrition scientists conducted unethical malnutrition and nutrition experiments on 1,300 children (Mosby, 2013). The researchers believed the children were "ideal test subjects" as they identified many already dealing with malnutrition (Mosby, 2013).



Figure 3, Nutrition Experiments at the Indian Residential Institution in Port Alberni, B.C., 1948. Photo credit: National Film Board of Canada.

It is important to recognize children were healthy and happy before attending these institutions but according to the nutritional researchers, Indigenous children were unhealthy, and disease ridden prior to living in these institutional conditions. The principal of Alberni Indian Residential Institution believed Indigenous culture and traditional food was the leading cause of malnutrition (Mosby, 2013). The researchers, principals and nuns created a "strategic formulation" in what they understood made assimilation an easier and faster process: starvation x physical/mental/sexual/spiritual abuse = assimilation.

Studies indicate residential institutional survivors that experienced starvation and malnutrition during childhood show linkages to higher risks of type 2 diabetes (Mosby, 2013).

Food historian Ian Mosby is well known for exposing the Canadian government for leading these nutritional experiments inside the residential institutions. Mosby continued to investigate and discovered serious health implications and connections to diabetes. He co-published an article entitled "*Hunger was never absent: How residential school diets shaped current patterns of diabetes among Indigenous peoples in Canada*" (Mosby & Galloway, 2017). In this paper he discusses how hunger and malnutrition have lasting "biological effects of sustained caloric restriction" (Mosby & Galloway, 2017). He goes on to explain,

*"The physiologies of height-stunted children prioritize fat over lean mass deposition, resulting in lower fat-free mass and a tendency toward greater fat-mass accumulation when nutritional*

*resources become available. The overall effect is an increased tendency toward obesity. Height-stunted youth demonstrate greater insulin sensitivity and lower insulin levels, making them prone to developing type 2 diabetes. Stunting arising from prolonged undernutrition also alters thyroid function, lowering the basal metabolic rate in stunted individuals. No less serious are the reproductive effects of stunting on women: greater risk of stillbirths, pre-term birth and neonatal death; complications with labour; and decreased offspring birth weight. Stunting also has negative consequences for neurologic, psychological, and immune system development and function." (pg. 2, 2017).*

More than 150,000 First Nations, Métis and Inuit children attended the 139 residential institutions created in Canada (Restoule, 2013). Thousands of children have died, many survivors have shared their stories of children disappearing, times of children deaths, children being buried on school grounds and the burning of children's bodies (Supernant, 2022). Hundreds of children's remains have been found at Marieval, Kuper Island, Kamloops, Brandon, Cowessess and many more residential institutions.

The last residential institution was in Saskatchewan and closed in 1996 (Restoule, 2013). To put into perspective, we are still living amongst residential institutional survivors today and many young Indigenous peoples have relatives and families that have shared their personal stories and have been deeply impacted by intergenerational trauma and

continue to heal and learn how to manage the insufferable complexities the residential institutional systems has instilled upon Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island.

In the text 'Sai'k'us Ts'eke Stoney Creek Woman: The Story of Mary John' written by Bridget Moran, Mary shares her experience at the residential institution Lejac in British Columbia. She always remembered feeling hungry. Mary shared her story and said:

*"I was always hungry. I missed the roast moose, the dried beaver meat, the fish fresh from a frying pan, the warm bread and bannock and berries. Oh, how I missed the food I used to have in my own home! At school, it was porridge, porridge, porridge, and if it wasn't that it was boiled barely or beans, and thick slices of bread spread with lard. Weeks went by without a taste of meat or fish. Such things as sugar or butter or jam only appeared on our tables on feast days, and sometimes not even then. A few times, I would catch the smell of roasting meat coming from the nuns' dining room, and I couldn't help myself – I would follow that smell to the very door. Apart from summers, I believe I was hungry for all seven of the years I was at school. Only later did I learn that the government gave the missionaries \$125 each year for every pupil in the school. This had to cover our food and clothing for ten months of the year, in addition*



Photo credit: Canadian Press, Justin Tang

to running and maintaining the school. No wonder we were on rations more suited to a concentration camp!" (pg. 54, 2010).

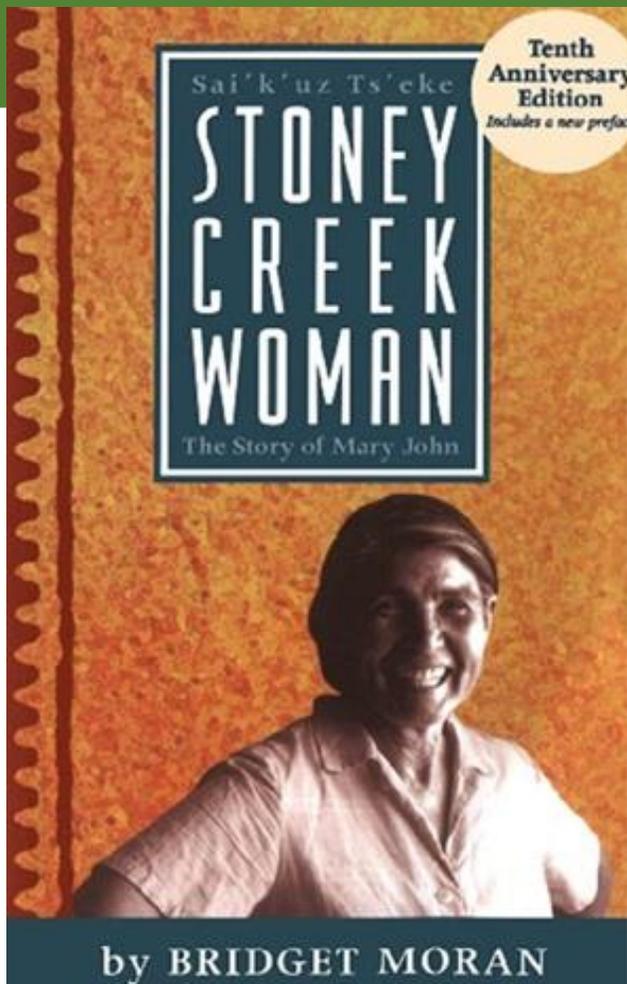


Figure 4, Sai'k'uz Ts'eke Stoney Creek Woman: The Story of Mary John. Author Bridget Morgan.

In 1965, Indian affairs Branch employee Russell Moses attended the Mohawk Institute in Brantford Ontario and shared his story and said:

*"Hunger was never absent. Breakfast consisted of two slices of bread with either jam or honey as the dressing, oatmeal with worms or corn meal porridge, which was minimal in quantity and appalling in quality. For lunch, it was water*

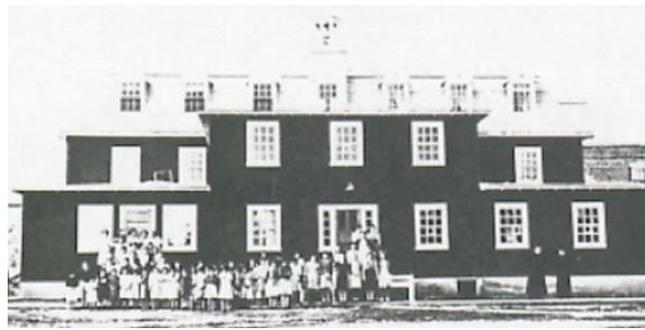


Figure 6, Île-à-la-Crosse Residential School. Photo credit: University of Regina Archives.

*as the beverage ... one and a half slices of dry bread, and the main course consisted of a 'rotten soup' ... (i.e., scraps of beef, vegetables, some in a state of decay). For supper, students were given two slices of bread and jam, fried potatoes, no meat, and a bun baked by the girls...hungry children eating from the swill barrel, picking out soggy bits of food that was intended for the pigs" (pg.1, Mosby & Galloway, 2017).*

Elder Mary Ruelling from Clearwater River Dënë Nation attended one of the oldest residential institutions in Île-à-la-Crosse, northern Saskatchewan that operated from 1821 to 1976 (Niessen, 2017). Mary always remembered feeling hungry and lonely for her parents, siblings and home. She recounted one of her most vivid memories at the residential institution in Île-à-la-Crosse. She, like Mary John was tired of porridge. She refused to continue to eat the "moldy, moldy porridge" the priest demanded her to eat (Ruelling, 2022-2023). The priest angrily got up and slammed her face into the bowl of moldy porridge and like the fighter she was, she fought back as much as she could. She began to share how much she missed her life on the trapline with her family in the boreal bush. She described

waking up in the cabin with her first 4 siblings and parents, listening to her mom start to build a fire and the crackling sounds and smells of the burning spruce that she missed so dearly. Her mother worked hard all day to keep them warm, fed and their home in good condition to survive the cold winter months. In the summer she would go berry picking and chicken hunting with her mom and grandmother. She remembers her mom cleaning the chicken's stomach and "blowing it up like a balloon to dry" (Ruelling, 2022-2023). Once the stomach dried her mom would throw dried blueberries and cranberries inside the stomach balloon and tie it to a willow stick, so it worked as baby rattle. She described how she would suck on it and how tasty it was.

She sucked on the rattle until it popped and then ate all the dried berries inside. "These days children's toys are toxic and full of plastic...they end up in hospitals for swallowing pieces of their harmful toys. Everything we ate and played with was natural, delicious, fresh and good for us" (Ruelling, 2022-2023).

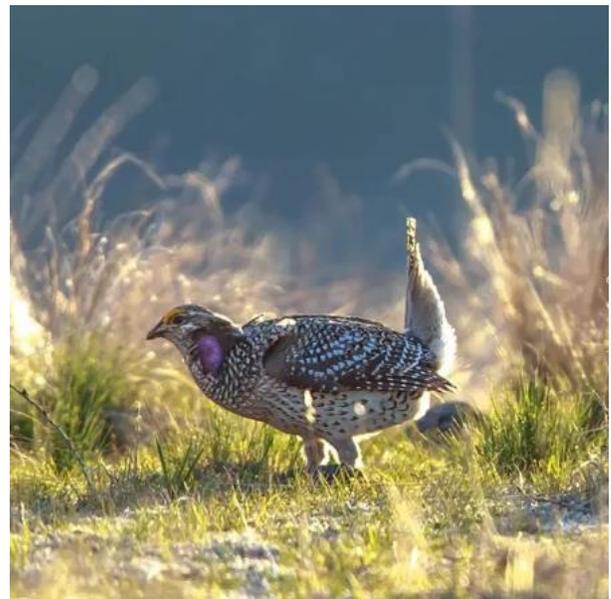


Figure 7, Sharp-Tailed Grouse. Photo credit: Animalia, 2023.



Her dad was away, sometimes months at a time working on the trapline to provide for his family. During summers he would canoe long distances to reach his traplines and in winter he would travel with his dog team. She reminisces on her days spent with her dad, siblings, and the dog team. She loved sitting in the sled and feeling the cold crisp and clean air. The dog teams' strength and her dad's navigation skills could take them anywhere they needed to go, "there was nothing like it, those days were the best days" (Ruelling, 2022-2023). How she wishes she could go back to "that good life". She shares how food in "those institutions and food in stores today are nothing like the food she grew up eating on the trapline" (Ruelling, 2022-2023). The dislocation and removal from her traditional foods she grew up eating helped her realize she was eating 'the healthiest and freshest food. It was good medicine that nourished not only her body but her mind and heart'. You can feel how much she misses her life with the land, food, and her family. The older she becomes the more she yearns to return to living on the trapline with her family again. Mary said, "to this day I will never eat porridge again" and now lives with type 2 diabetes (Ruelling, 2022-2023).

## 4.0 Indigenous re-Search Positionality

Indigenous positionality is to reflect on and to honour all that has shaped you, by introducing yourself, your kinships to home, family, and Creator-Mother Earth. In this framework, conversations on kinship, land, and culture will be positioned to activate healing and the emergence of synergistic research ways that have the potential to strengthen collaborations among communities and researchers.

To strengthen our relationship to community research, we are shifting the paradigm and begin to reposition the term research to re-Search. The intentional restructure of research to re-Search is inspired by Anishinaabe scholar Minogizhigokwe [Kathleen Absolon]. In her text, *'Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know Indigenous re-Search Methodologies'*, she restores and resurges Indigenous knowledge and practices by disrupting the 'colonial coma and waking us up!' (pg. preface xv, 2022). She provides intricate context to learn how critical it is to re-learn, learn and unlearn the common themes and conversations surrounding the term "research" in relation to Indigenous communities. In her chapter "Preparing to Search" she explains,

*"The term "research" has a lot of colonial baggage attached to it. In most Indigenous communities, research is a bad word. It conjures up suspicion and distrust. As an Indigenous*

*knowledge seeker, I have struggled with this term. While writing this book I sought to identify or create other terms that reflect Indigenous processes of knowledge seeking and production. I journeyed into my experiences and remembered, for example, that Indigenous peoples search for knowledge, food and medicines. We gather berries, plants and herbs and we hunt moose, deer, geese and ducks. We also trap rabbits, beavers and muskrats. We harvest food and medicines from the forest and earth, and the knowledge of how to do these things has been developed, shared and passed down from generation to generation. Terms that reflect Indigenous ways of collecting and finding out are searching, harvesting. Picking, gathering, hunting and trapping. Within this book I commonly use the words search and gather in lieu of research. I now hyphenate re-search, meaning to look again. To search again from our own location and to search again using our own ways of Anishinaabek is Indigenous re-search. It is the process of how we come to know. The focus, topic and questions surrounding the re-search are relative to Indigenous peoples' realities. The research is by nature related to Indigenous peoples' realities. The research is by nature related to Indigenous peoples' contexts: historical, political, legal, economical, geographical, cultural, spiritual, environmental and experiential. Indigenist re-search promotes Indigenous knowledge and methods. As we re-search, we re-write and we re-story ourselves" (pg. 21).*

Absolon powerfully rearticulates re-Search and sets the decolonial tone to help guide and lead us into the strength and value-driven solutions, to give us new space to rethink and reframe how we approach re-Search in Indigenous communities.

## 5.0 Strength and Value Driven Solutions

Strength and value driven solutions emanate from the multitude of lived experiences, insights, working collaborations and partnerships with land and community. As we speak, share and explore renewed and new teachings, experiences and discoveries, we begin to relearn together as re-Search relatives. Approaching the paradigm shift to unravel and shake linear systems to re-train our brains as re-Searchers, we find ourselves in '*decolonizing collaborative spaces*'. Some refer to this space as "two-eyed seeing" or the "third-space" and may be familiar with these concepts through literature on Indigenous epistemologies. These collaborative spaces are found among and intersecting Indigenous knowledge and Western science. Indigenous scholars argue that these concepts and narratives are heavily influenced by westernized scholars and systems (Simpson, pgs. 138-39. 2001). It may seem that what is considered culturally appropriate language and practice is in constant flux, leading to feelings of frustration and confusion. Consider that Indigenous ways and worldviews are living documents. Our ways and worldviews originate with the land. As the land changes and transforms, we also evolve and adapt to successfully survive and continue living with the land. We are born nomadic- always moving with the seasons, navigating Mother Earth and all her strengths and challenges, and discovering new life. As we are born nomadic, our re-Search is born nomadic.

In order to prevent Indigenous concepts from becoming overpowered by western literature, it is necessary that we support Indigenous scholars and their re-Search autonomy. Leanne Simpson is an Anishinaabe scholar, her Anishinaabe name is Petasamosake [Walking Towards Women]. In her body of work, "*Aboriginal Peoples and Knowledge: Decolonizing Our Processes*" (2001) she talks about taking control of our re-Search stories (pgs. 137-39, 2001) to take back our power of knowledge and to no longer accept our knowledge being used as a commodity (pg. 140). Like Petasamosake, Minogizhigokwe and many other movers; I share these experiences and teachings as a growing re-Searcher with First Nation, Metis and Inuit communities across Turtle Island. Petasamosake and Minogizhigokwe help lead us back to the underlying question: As researchers', how can we work respectfully with community when cultural practices and methods are moving and transforming, and literature sometimes displaces the balance and core understanding of our natural non-linear systems?

In order to take control of our own re-Search story at Clearwater River Dënë Nation, we had to focus on what would work for us in our own community. Through reflection, experience, observation and valuable teaching we found the autonomy of our own story. By working together as a community with the land, we defined what the middle space means for us, ensuring that we avoid falling into systems that do not work for us. We had to define and discover our "*decolonizing collaborative space*" by living it.

Our ancestors created their policies, protocols, and systems through lived experiences. We honour them and reinvigorate our culture by practicing these lifeways. Rather than refer to existing literature, we refer to our natural databases (Indigenous, traditional and local knowledge) and

Indigenous intelligence. Refer to *figure 8* below, "*Beading A New World*" - this community-driven logo represents the building of healthy, robust, and reciprocal collaborative partnerships between Indigenous science and interdisciplinary science. The lungs represent the boreal forest and the oxygen and clean air it gifts us with. Our trees work as carbon sinks. Notice how the anatomy of the



Figure 8, "*Beading A New World*" Community Project Logo (right figure). Logo Decolonial Artist: Eloy Bida. Logo Vision, Clearwater River Dënë Nation, Saskatchewan Treaty Partners.2021-2022.

lungs, the lobes, and bronchi, resemble the branches and root networks of trees. When you chop or core a tree, you can see the tree rings. The tree rings look very similar to a human fingerprint - this signifies our interconnection to Mother Earth. When the roots find each other, life begins to form. You see trees, soil, fish, northern lights, stars, etc., inside the intersecting middle space- the '*decolonizing collaborative space*'. It is in this space, we practice open-mindedness, uncomfortable truths, conversation, acceptance, transparency, honesty, integrity, compassion, and holistic reciprocity. In this new space, we embrace a unified and multi-science perspective that accepts and validates human knowledge systems of the natural world, based within their special worldviews. This is where you find common ground and balance between knowledge systems. The lungs and their connection represent what happens when we work collaboratively and equally in partnership. This collaboration creates powerful relationships that allow re-Search to be more effective, efficient, transformative, and empowering. Working as a united human race to establish harmonious co-solutions can drive the creation of your own community re-Search stories. The overall shape of the logo is the shape of the brain. This is symbolic of new life, new relationships, and new consciousness. It is a rebirth of re-Search.

As we (myself, Mother Earth, my community members, and the Treaty partners we have the privilege of building relationships with) walked our *rebirth of re-Search* path, we explored uncomfortable and unknown spaces, and we have a responsibility to share what we learned there as part of honouring our natural laws.

Community re-Search and leadership can be challenging work because of the deep systematic colonialism we are still living with. Community work means understanding that there are real hardships and political dynamics involved (*figure 1*). We have relearned how to manage these complexities in mindful and practical ways. Do not get lost in these complexities. Be patient and compassionate, with yourself and with community. Retrain your research brain - situate the research so it becomes community re-Search. Find out what works for you as the re-Searcher to align with community based on their and worldviews. Find out what the community aspires to and how they inclusively and directly benefit from the re-Search. Break the patterns of what you believe or might have concluded "works" for community based on statistics, surveys, media

coverage and/or the pedagogies you are trained to practice. This way of thinking helps prevent the unintentional practice of unethical and culturally inappropriate communication and methodologies.-Allow for space and time to build relationships, and trust and practice reciprocity with every relationship (acquaintance or close). Be thoughtful and work with care.

Take care of yourself; with colonization comes unimaginable hurt and pain. Respect your relationship with yourself but also with your re-Search. Give yourself time to reflect on your re-Search and space to grieve the adversities. Learn from your mistakes, knowing that you will make them. Forgive yourself and move forward with your good work as you learn from these valuable lessons. Do not be afraid to ask questions but be cautious who you are asking - learn who has the capacity and the mind space to act as a guide in your learning. Take a lead role in your own education when it comes to issues related to our shared history).

Community work is groundbreaking work when you lead with passion, integrity, compassion, reciprocity, humility, relationships, responsibility, respect, and resilience. If you find yourself working with systems that do not give you the space to practice strength and value driven methods, speak up and use your voice to help shift the paradigm. You may face challenges and barriers that prevent you from practicing preventive work versus reactive and responsive practices that often come with community work. These are the systems and practices we must work together to dismantle. When you challenge existing systems that are not strength and value based, you may be surprised by your success in dismantling, reshaping, and reframing them.



Recharging re-Search proactively involves making time to learn about our shared colonial history, to read, listen and learn more about reconciliation and respectful engagement in re-Search. Educate yourself on the principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) when it comes to the relationship between First Nations and their cultural knowledge, data and information. Understand the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) mandate to inform Canadians about the legacy of Residential Schools and the 94 calls to action for Canadians. Practice the 5 R's of Indigenous Pedagogy: Relationships, Respect (of participant worldview, knowledge, values and practices), Relevance, Responsibility, and Reciprocity. They offer a framework for re-Search. And finally, read the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). It offers a framework for reconciliation, healing, peace, and cooperative relation based upon the principles of justice, democracy, respect of human rights, non-discrimination and good faith. Remember to give yourself and community grace, it takes time, and hard work to find our '*decolonizing collaborative spaces*'; and in doing so, our re-Search becomes an act of ceremony.



## 6.0 Read for Reconciliation

Read For Reconciliation & Support Our Relatives

TikTok:

@auntyjocey Jocelyn Joe-Strack Indigenous scientist

@abearlaw Andre Bear Indigenous advocate of inherent and Treaty Rights

@notoriouscree James Jones Cree dancer

@fawn.wood Fawn Wood Cree-Salish Singer

@kendrajessie Kendra jessie Cree Ukrainian dancing to heal and reconnect

@pampalmater Dr. Pam Palmater Mi'kmaw Lawyer and Indigenous education leader

### Instagram:

@raven\_reads Raven Reads Indigenous owned literature

@chief ladybird Chief Lady Bird Eagle Clan Artist

@morning.star.designs Alanah Jewell Haudenosaunee creator/artist

@eloybida Eloy Bida decolonial Indigenous artist

@pow\_wow\_pitch Pow Wow Pitch Grassroots community by and for Indigenous entrepreneurs to support collective impact and success

@artbybreannadeis Ulkatcho Dene beader and Indigenous doll creator

### Websites:

<http://christibelcourt.com/>

<https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/>

<https://breannadeis.com/>

<https://gem.cbc.ca/collections/truth-and-reconciliation-collection>

<https://www.aptn.ca/>

<https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training/>

<https://sevengenenergy.org/>

[https://www.nfb.ca/indigenous-cinema/?&film\\_lang=en&sort=year:desc,title&year\\_min=1939&year\\_max=2023](https://www.nfb.ca/indigenous-cinema/?&film_lang=en&sort=year:desc,title&year_min=1939&year_max=2023)

### Podcasts:

*Indigenous Climate Action Pod* hosted by Lindsey Bacigal, Brina Romanek & Morningstar Derosier.

*All My Relations* hosted by Matika Wilbur (Swinomish and Tulalip) and Dr. Adrienne Keene (Cherokee Nation).

*This Land* hosted by Rebecca Nagle.

*Warrior Life* hosted by Pam Palmater.

*Unreserved* hosted by Rosanna Deerchild.

*Seedcast* hosted by Nia Tero.

*Unrooted* hosted by the Indigenous Foundation

### Texts:

*Sai'k'uz Ts'eke Stoney Creek Woman: The Story of Mary John* by Bridget Moran

*Research Is Ceremony* by Shawn Wilson

*Kaandossiwin How We Come to Know Indigenous re-Search Methodologies* by Minogizhigokwe

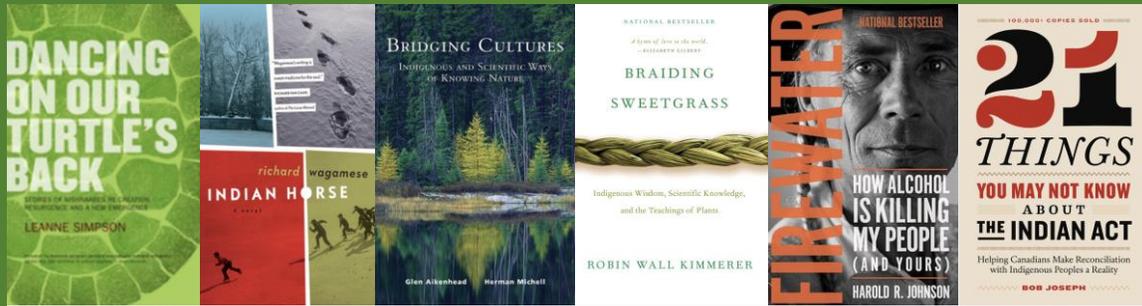
*Dancing On Our Turtle's Back* by Leanne Simpson

*Indian Horse* by Richard Wagamese

*Bridging Cultures: Indigenous And Scientific Ways of Knowing Nature* by Glen Aikenhead & Herman Michell

*Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* by Robin Kimmerer

*Firewater: How Alcohol Is Killing My People (and Yours)* by Harold Johnson  
*21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act* by Bob Joseph  
*Fresh Banana Leaves: Healing Indigenous Landscapes through Indigenous Science* by Jessica Hernandez  
*My Conversations with Canadians* by Lee Maracle  
*My Privilege, My Responsibility* by Sheila North



**Films:**

*A Village of Widows* Directed by Peter Blow  
*Reel Injun: On The Trail of The Hollywood Indian* Directed by Neil Diamond, Catherine Bainbridge & Jeremiah Hayes  
*RUMBLE: The Indians Who Rocked the World* Directed by Catherine Bainbridge  
*We Were Children* Directed by Tim Wolochatiuk



## 7.0 Detailed Biography of the Author

Ĕdlánēt'ĕ [Hello, how are you]. I'm grateful to have the opportunity to formally introduce myself. My name is Dĕnĕ Cheecham-Uhrich, home to the Dĕnĕsulĭnĕ Treaty 8 Territory Clearwater River Dĕnĕ Nation in Northern Saskatchewan. I had the privilege of growing up with my community and the land, immersed in our Dĕnĕ culture and language. It's important I introduce the foundation of my family, to give gratitude, respect and honour to my kinships and intrinsic connections to the water-boreal world.

My hama [mother], late haba [father], late sĕtsunĕ [grandmother] and sĕtsĭĕ [grandfather], and my sĕ?e kwi [aunties and uncles] were and continue to be strong influences and educators in my life. My hama is a fierce Dĕnĕ language protector, Indigenous educator and successfully achieved her Masters in Northern Governance and Development. My late haba was the vice principal, educator, hockey, and wrestling coach of Ducharme Elementary School in La Loche. He had the purest and most natural love for his students, the bush and community. My sĕtsunĕ as an incredibly talented beader, gatherer, provider, caregiver, and businesswoman of La Loche and my sĕtsĭĕ was a king trapper, tracker, hunter, provider, and businessman of La Loche. They were well respected members and good friends. People would travel from many diverse Indigenous nations to visit and spend quality time with my sĕtsunĕ and sĕtsĭĕ. Listening to them speak in their mother tongue and tell their stories while they drank their teas and enjoyed their traditional bush food is one of my fondest memories. Living those experiences helped shape my values, worldviews, and passions. My family and their love and embrace for culture, nuhĕ nĕnĕ [home], nih [land], tu [water], ĕch'ĕrĕ [animals], people and community have and will always be my inspiration and drive for my passion of our biodiversity, both locally and globally.

I completed my 4-year Bachelor Arts degree in Indigenous Studies with master level experience in advanced hydrology and planetary health with the goal of joining the Master of Water Security program with Global Water Futures at the University of Saskatchewan, to work collaboratively with both Indigenous and interdisciplinary scientific knowledge systems, developing robust relationships and partnerships between northern Indigenous communities and researchers from all disciplines.

I'm an independent Treaty 8 Territory consultant for collaborative planetary health research. I've worked with SENS Professor Graham Strickert at the Global Institute for Water Security with Global Water Futures, on a beneficial management practices (BMPs) project, that focused on exploring stakeholders' subjective perspectives about BMPs and policy with his human dimensions of water security lab team. I also had the honour of receiving the global planetary health scholarship and lived in Jinja, Uganda for the duration of 4 months.

In collaboration with the National Fisheries Resources Research Institute, our water science team and natural scientist Dr. William Okello, conducted a nutrient enrichment experiment designed to measure in situ, the impacts of different forms of nitrogen on cyanobacteria growth in Napoleon Gulf on Lake Victoria, Uganda.

My water experiences have introduced me to beautiful water communities and water stories that naturally led me to the creation of our innovative community driven project, "Beading A New World: Collective Climate Accountability and Adaptation Project" (CCAAP). Together with my academic collaborators, Professors Milla Rautio, and Jules Blais, government, industry, and organization partners (Clearwater River Dënë Nation Band, Métis Nation Saskatchewan, CanNorth Environmental Consulting, NexGen Energy Ltd., and Fission Uranium Corp.) are leading an ECCC Climate Action and Awareness Project that establishes Indigenous communities as equal treaty partners in Canada's transition to a low-carbon and sustainable society. We were overwhelmingly successful in creating powerful relationships that allow science to be more effective and efficient in developing community led water security solutions by establishing a "new way" of exploring and navigating different knowledge systems with Indigenous communities.

Clearwater River Dënë Nation is a Dënë and Métis northern community, home to the boreal forest with a growing population of 4,800 community members. Our community is a resilient community that struggles with social, economic, and environmental policy and management. We are at risk to adapt to climate change, and with new multiple uranium mining development companies in the southwestern Athabasca Basin of Saskatchewan, there is significant potential to affect our homeland. CCAAP has provided interdisciplinary knowledge to strengthen our community's health and well-being challenges.

We Dënësųlinë have been on our sacred land for 12,000 years and we depend on hunting, trapping, and gathering not only for food to support the local economy but also as the basis of our axiology to our Dënësųlinë culture and social identity. Some of the concerns we face as a community include the changes in the abundance and availability of our healthy traditional keystone food sources, our perceived reduction in weather predictions, the extreme rise and drop in water levels, and the safety of traveling in changing weather conditions in our cold climate with inadequate infrastructure. These concerns pose serious challenges to our human health and well-being.

CCAAP has the potential to give our youth a lifeline. We are hopeful that CCAAP will provide vital opportunities for youth to be inspired to combine their life experiences and knowledge with careers that would benefit communities through enhancing aquatic and boreal ecosystem functions and services. These opportunities have and will continue to give them voice, sense of purpose, self-empowerment, and confidence.

Ĕđđlot'inë dų łtsı is a Dënësųlinë concept, meaning to create relations, understanding, and accepting we are all interconnected and related present and future. Ĕđđlot'inë dų łtsı supports the purpose of ethical and equal science systems. I live by Ĕđđlot'inë dų łtsı and believe it advances inclusive planetary health solutions and water security for our communities.

Marsi Cho [Thank You], Hotię Ĕđđk!"Inı [Take Care].

Dënë Cheecham-Uhrich

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