Indigenous works and two eyed seeing: mapping the case for indigenous-led research

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore Indigenous Works’ efforts to facilitate Indigenous-led research that is responsive to the socio-economic needs, values and traditions of Indigenous communities.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper is grounded in an Indigenous research paradigm that is facilitated by Indigenous-led community-based participatory action research (PAR) methodology informed by the Two Row Wampum and Two-Eyed Seeing framework to bridge Indigenous science and knowledge systems with western ones.

Findings – The findings point to the need for greater focus on how Indigenous and western knowledge may be aligned within the methodological content domain while tackling a wide array of Indigenous research goals that involve non-Indigenous allies.

Originality/value – This paper addresses the need to develop insights and understandings into how to develop a safe, ethical space for Indigenous-led trans-disciplinary and multi-community collaborative research partnerships that contribute to community self-governance and well-being.

Keywords Two Row Wampum, Two-Eyed Seeing, Decolonizing methodologies, Indigenous knowledge, Reconciliation, Corporate engagement, Indigenous ways of knowing

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

One of the grand challenges that face Canadians is reconciliation (George et al., 2016). Indigenous peoples continue to suffer from the impact of colonization; historically, colonial policies were aimed at diminishing and/or eradicating Indigenous communities’ cultures, practices, identities and ultimately, their economic power. Post-colonial governments exacerbated these negative effects by supporting and advancing non-Indigenous interests over those of Indigenous peoples (Russell, 2009). This has spurred a philosophy of self-determinism that is evidenced through Indigenous ways of organizing economic development activities. Proactive community strategies are often implemented using a wide variety of ventures to address diverse socio-economic issues, such as healthcare, economic development, infrastructure, education, housing, culture and language revitalization (Colbourne, 2017). These activities build on growing global support for Indigenous rights and self-determination combined with new ways of pursuing reconciliation and increasing well-being based on traditional principles (Gladu, 2016; Sengupta et al., 2015). Development activities within Indigenous communities are manifested by Indigenous-led organizations and ventures that

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are characterized by size, impact, diversity in where they are located, how they are governed and organized and in how their strategies respond to or resonate with community values and socio-economic needs (Colbourne, 2017; Hindle and Moroz, 2010; Anderson et al., 2004, 2006; Lindsay, 2005; Peredo et al., 2004). Yet most Indigenous communities have yet to link meaningful research initiatives to these activities.

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) has observed that Indigenous-led research will play a fundamental role in promoting reconciliation and community well-being. The results, outcomes and outputs of respectful Indigenous-led research will inform policy-making and initiate change in communities, organizations and governments in ways that will mitigate intercultural conflict, build trust, social capacity and practical skills of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers and community members (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 293). Specific to Indigenous ways of organizing, there is an estimated 43,000 Indigenous economic ventures in Canada that have contributed almost $12bn to Canada’s GDP (Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, 2016). The research conducted by and for these communities is highly disproportionate, especially when considering that Indigenous economic development ventures are central to community self-determination and community socio-economic well-being, as well as central to facilitating community engagement and reconciliation efforts with non-Indigenous organizations. Yet there are promising examples of how Indigenous-led research may contribute to these gaps. Indigenous Works (2017b, 2018), a national Indigenous not-for-profit organization has identified that there are:

1. limited insights into the composition and functional dynamics of Indigenous business ecosystems within which Indigenous ventures operate and, on the impact, that Indigenous ventures have on local, regional and national economies;

2. no comprehensive understandings of Indigenous ventures and a lack of information and documentation about how Indigenous ways of organizing economic development are governed, operate and partner with non-Indigenous ventures;

3. limited understandings by both Indigenous ventures and non-Indigenous ventures on the market potential of collaborations and partnerships; and

4. no clear economic and labour market profiles of Indigenous ventures that can inform potential collaborations or partnership opportunities with non-Indigenous ventures in Canada.

In initiating Indigenous-led research with Indigenous and non-Indigenous business communities to address these challenges, Indigenous Works (IW) recognizes the need to develop new research paradigms that draw from Indigenous worldviews to advance socio-economic development and community well-being as a pathway to reconciliation. The discussion that follows describes community-based research grounded in an Indigenous research paradigm informed by a Two-Row Wampum (Onondaga Nation, 2019) paradigm utilizing the Two-Eyed Seeing method (Bartlett et al., 2012) to demonstrate how Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge systems (represented by the canoe and the ship in the Two Row Wampum) are interwoven using the integrative method of Two-Eyed Seeing. Two-Eyed Seeing provides both guidance and instruction on how to bridge Indigenous forms of science and knowing with western science and knowing. It accords legitimacy to all forms of knowing asserting that divergent epistemologies are equally valuable and capable of generating further knowledge and insights (Bartlett et al., 2012). Thus, in the sections that follow, we build on the work of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars (cf. Hill and Coleman, 2018; Peltier, 2018; Haas, 2017; Morcom, 2017; Hall et al., 2015; Latulippe, 2015; Marsh et al., 2015; Hatcher et al., 2009; Iwama et al., 2009) and discuss how and why Two Row Wampum and Two-Eyed Seeing are combined into a decolonizing methodology. We also describe how this method was practiced by IW to promote a critical Indigenous
research paradigm by creating safe spaces for dialogue and action that bridges Indigenous, academic, corporate, entrepreneurial and government communities and enables inclusive, respectful and reciprocal relations.

The paper begins with a description of Indigenous-led research in context of Indigenous research paradigms featuring insights into Two Row wampum and Two-Eyed Seeing. Next, it explores how community-based participatory case study research aligns well with the imperatives underlying Indigenous-led research. Finally, it explores the case study site, IW, before providing a systematic discussion of how this organization is playing an important role in initiating, leading and disseminating Indigenous-led research protocols, projects and outputs.

Predicate perspectives
Qualitative research methods consist of three interrelated components that work in unison: epistemology, ontological paradigms and the methods used to collect and interpret data into usable and relatable knowledge (Hindle, 2004). Hindle also states that ultimately, the research methods must also reflect the context and situations under observation. Thus, to be precise, research methods must be appropriate. Kovach (2009) states that when considering the unique contexts of Indigenous peoples, research methodologies and methods must be guided by and grounded in Indigenous epistemologies to produce knowledge that is relevant and respectful to Indigenous community partners that considers their ways of knowing and being. Thus, community-led processes of engagement and action are critically linked to providing mutually beneficial research that contributes to the socio-economic well-being and self-determination of Indigenous peoples. As discussed above, it is also important to draw on Indigenous research paradigms and to choose complementary western methodologies and methods that challenge and disrupt colonialism through honoring and respecting the culture, values and ways of knowing and being of Indigenous peoples (Kovach, 2009). The dualism of philosophy and ontology reflected by the colonizer and colonized thus requires further attention when considering how Indigenous-led research must be conceptualized and implemented.

Indigenous-led research
While Indigenous peoples do not share identical worldviews, most have a land-based, wholistic and relational worldview that is both spiritual and material. Many Indigenous communities have a profound connection to their land of origin (traditional territory) and to the interdependent ecosystem of fauna and flora within which they live. The result is a worldview that is founded on the recognition of a relational ontology or the interdependency of people and the natural and spiritual realms (Colbourne, 2017; Ermine, 2007; Ermine et al., 2004; Battiste and Youngblood Henderson, 2000). This worldview stresses that Indigenous peoples are stewards of the land with a responsibility to ensure that all of their actions care for, respect, conserve and promote well-being for all people, fauna and flora within their traditional territories (Kuokkanen, 2011; Spiller et al., 2011, p. 223; Wuttunee, 2004). Indigenous ways of knowing are embedded in land and communities – their cultures, values and traditions – and, therefore, Indigenous-led research needs to be responsive to a balanced set of priorities dependent on their communities’ and partners’ social and economic objectives.

Decolonizing research can be achieved through the development of Indigenous research paradigms that challenge and decolonize western, Eurocentric paradigms and the training of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers and allies in Indigenous methodologies that assert the value of Indigenous knowledge traditions and promote mutually responsible and reciprocal relationships (McGregor et al., 2018; Peltier, 2018). This means that Indigenous people decide why, what and when knowledge is being sought and the methods being used to seek it – it also means that Indigenous people are valued as the experts and Indigenous standards are used to assess the meaning and values of research findings.
Indigenous-led research is essential to addressing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) Calls to Action and is central to the reconciliation process. Amongst its 94 Calls to Action, the TRC called on corporate Canada to provide Indigenous peoples with equitable access to jobs, training and education opportunities; to commit to meaningful consultation and to building respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples; and to ensuring that communities gain long-term sustainable benefits from projects. The need to develop Indigenous research paradigms is also a practical response to the changes that current national research funding agencies (see e.g. Mitacs, 2019; NSERC, 2019; SSHRC, 2019) have made in encouraging, even requiring, Indigenous-led research, co-creation, inclusion of Indigenous methodologies and community dissemination of findings beyond traditional academic channels.

While Indigenous and non-Indigenous ventures, communities, research agencies, universities and researchers are motivated to explore the potential in Indigenous research paradigms, IW’s research identified three central challenges facing Indigenous-led research initiatives in Canada (Indigenous Works, 2017a). First, they found that 85 percent of the organizations surveyed lacked key understandings, capabilities and competencies required to engage and partner with Indigenous organizations. Second, the nexus of power for acting, incentivizing and resourcing Indigenous-led research initiatives does not sit within Indigenous communities but is situated within dominant western, Eurocentric academic and governmental organizations. Third, dominant western, Eurocentric academic and governmental organizations are just beginning to understand how their institutions are both colonized and colonizers in Canada and the nature of the work required to become allies to Indigenous peoples and are struggling to understand how to respond to and act on the TRC’s Calls to Action. What follows is a description of how an Indigenous research paradigm in which Two Row Wampum and Two-Eyed Seeing is posited as a framework and method for reconciling the use of Indigenous ways of knowing and knowledge with western, Eurocentric methodologies and methods (Indigenous Works, 2017a, b, 2018; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015).

Two Row Wampum. Wampum belts are constructed of short tubular beads made from whelk shells, the interior of quahog shells or from the darker purple exterior of quahog shells which are strung and woven into belts. While wampum belts are most commonly associated with the Nations of the Hodinöhso:ni’ (Haudenosaunee) confederacy, they are used by a variety of other First Nations throughout the Eastern Woodlands (Morcom, 2017, p. 131). Wampum belts were used to capture the words and pledges made in its presence, served as records and ceremonial markers of important events such as alliances, treaties, marriages, ceremonies and wars, and to honour individuals (Hill and Coleman, 2018, pp. 5-6; Haas, 2017; Morcom, 2017). The original Two Row Wampum belt, called Two Paths or Teioháte (Mohawk language), Kaswentha (Wampum Belt) or Tekani teyothata’te kaswenta (Cayuga language) is most widely known for depicting the nation-to-nation relationships between Indigenous people and settlers (Hill and Coleman, 2018, p. 6). Specifically, it describes part of a friendship treaty between the Dutch and Hodinöhso:ni’ and consists of two rows of purple beads separated by rows of white beads (see Figure 1).
The fundamental principles of the Two Row Wampum are that the two rows of purple beads which represent the canoe (Hodinóhsö:ni) and the boat (Dutch) travel side by side and neither will attempt to steer their vessel in the path of the other vessel, with each Nation respecting each other’s ways of knowing, laws and spirituality (religion) forever. The three rows of white wampum beads, while keeping the two Nations separate, also binds them to live in mutual friendship, peace and respect. According to Hodinóhsö:ni philosophy and practices, the Two Row Wampum is a living treaty by which Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can live together in peace while respecting each other’s ways of being and knowing. In this manner, the renewal of ongoing relationships is underpinned by interaction, assistance and reciprocal relations that support peaceful coexistence and facilitate mutual reciprocity (Onondaga Nation, 2019; Latulippe, 2015, pp. 8-9; Turner, 2006, p. 54).

Two-Eyed Seeing. While Indigenous and western scientific knowledge systems are both based on observations of the natural world and each are formed and guided by distinct histories, knowledge traditions, values, interests and social, economic and political realities – each is colonized (Ermine et al., 2004, p. 19; Little Bear, 2000, p. 85). Both the colonizer and the colonized have shared or collective views of the world derived from similar intellectual processes embedded in their languages, stories and narratives. No one has a worldview that is purely Indigenous or Eurocentric; rather, “everyone has an integrated mind, a fluxing and ambidextrous consciousness, a pre-colonized consciousness that flows into a colonized consciousness and back again” (Little Bear, 2000, p. 85). Based on Mi’kmaw principles of Etuaptmumk and on the work and teachings of Mi’kmaw elder and knowledge holder, Albert Marshall, Two-Eyed Seeing brings together the strengths of Indigenous knowledge systems with western, Eurocentric ones guided by the principle that researchers engage in bridging overlapping perspectives with each eye (McGregor, 2018; Iwama et al., 2009, p. 4). Etuaptmumk is a way of being, seeing and living life that emphasizes learning and valuing multiple perspectives and ways of knowing equally (Albert Marshall cited in Rowett, 2018, p. 55). Consistent with the two separate but parallel paths of the canoe and ship in the Two Row Wampum, Two-Eyed Seeing involves learning to see with the strengths of each knowledge system and together with one eye never subsuming the other (Martin, 2012). It is a practice of decolonizing research that stresses a weaving back and forth between separate but parallel ways of knowing (knowledge systems) each of which is important and necessary to generating knowledge and knowing that leads to greater socio-economic well-being in the world (Luby et al., 2018; McGregor, 2018; Bartlett et al., 2012, pp. 209-210; Iwama et al., 2009) (see Figure 2).

Central to the application of Two-Eyed Seeing is a respect for diversity of thought and ways of knowing which facilitate understandings that are responsive to changes and fluctuations in the world (Loppie, 2007 cited in Martin, 2012, p. 28). Adopting Two-Eyed Seeing involves recognizing the importance of diverse knowledge systems rooted in different spaces and places and grounded in local perspectives, languages, understandings, ways of knowing and being in a manner that promotes self-determination and the socio-economic well-being of Indigenous peoples (McGregor, 2018, p. 304; Martin, 2012, p. 29). This integrative approach enables reflection on which elements of Indigenous and/or western sciences are most appropriate for identifying and addressing relevant issues, challenges or opportunities for Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. For example, some western methodologies may overlap with those of Indigenous methodologies, such as storytelling (Kovach, 2009). It also encourages both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers to identify and acknowledge the limitations and challenges inherent in focusing solely on single knowledge systems such as Indigenous or western and encourages exploring perspectives and understandings of diverse knowledge systems to include physical, social, emotional and spiritual dimensions (Martin, 2012, p. 37).
Embedding Two-Eyed Seeing in the Two Row Wampum. Embedding Two-Eyed Seeing into the Two Row Wampum framework facilitates Indigenous-led research that is ethically and philosophically aligned with Indigenous worldviews (Peltier, 2018, p. 2). In the shared space of peace, friendship and respect within which the canoe (Indigenous knowledge, ways of knowing and being) and the boat (western knowledge, ways of knowing and being) navigate, the space of Two-Eyed Seeing is a shared, overlapping space in which the strengths, complementarities and challenges of each (Indigenous and western ways of knowing) are applied to practice (Bull, 2016) (see Figure 3).

It is a space of divergence and convergence between each way of knowing and being that yields a more wholistic understanding of the phenomena being researched (Bull, 2016; Ermine et al., 2004). This ethical space of Two-Eyed Seeing provides safety for distinct

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**Figure 2.**
Two-Eyed Seeing

**Sources:** Bartlett et al. (2012); Bartlett (2010)

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**Figure 3.**
Two Row Wampum and the ethical space of Two-eyed Seeing
cultures, worldviews, and knowledge systems to engage in an ethical/moral manner focused on facilitating substantial and sustained understandings between each way of knowing and being (Ermine, 2007, p. 20). Power is centered in Indigenous communities, institutions and organizations and community research protocols are posited, community advisory committees formed and interactions, engagement and reciprocity in knowledge exchange encouraged (McGregor et al., 2018, p. 6; Bull, 2016; Ermine et al., 2004). Researchers and communities work within this ethical space in an emergent process moving from initial conversations and dialogue with all participants about their underlying intentions, values and assumptions towards agreement on the research process that facilitates amicable partnerships and research dissemination strategies that bridge the ways knowing and being of researchers and Indigenous communities (Ermine, 2007, p. 20).

As will be described below, IW occupies this ethical space of Two-Eyed Seeing between each way of knowing and being. Within this space, it develops research objectives, theoretical frameworks and research implementations that are grounded in and responsive to the socio-economic needs of Indigenous economic ventures, the communities within which these are embedded as well as with governments, academic institutions, researchers and the non-Indigenous business community. Through their work, they are enabling future generations to preserve and regenerate Indigenous socio-economic well-being by facilitating respectful, equitable and healthy relationships with partners and collaborators.

Community-based participatory action research
Community-based participatory action research engages the active involvement of community members, organizational representatives and researchers though all stages in the research process to address social, structural and physical environmental issues and challenges. This involves engaging community members in the design, delivery and dissemination of research as equal partners rather than being merely being the objects of research (Peltier, 2018, p. 4; Evans et al., 2009; Jacklin and Kinoshameg, 2008). All participants are expected to contribute their knowledge and expertise to generate knowledge and initiate action to benefit the community (Peltier, 2018, p. 4; Evans et al., 2009, p. 896; Holkup et al., 2004, p. 2). The result is a research process that probes much more deeply into context, issues, research questions and appropriate research methods. The research process itself is, therefore, much deeper and context sensitive and results in much richer data. The eight principles that follow (see Table I) provide a guide to understanding the necessary elements for a successful Indigenous-led research partnership with Indigenous communities (Jacklin and Kinoshameg, 2008, p. 59).

The eight principles apply to the entire research process as it proceeds through planning, implementation, knowledge production and action. As the research process proceeds, communities or individual participants cycle through four moments of engagement, capacity building, empowerment and self-determination in research (Jacklin and Kinoshameg, 2008, p. 59). The case study that follows demonstrates how IW intuitively adheres to the eight principles. It describes how IW operates in the ethical space of Two-Eyed Seeing to enable partners and communities to move through the four moments of engagement, capacity building, empowerment and self-determination to create mutually beneficial knowledge that promotes self-determination and socio-economic well-being.

Case: Indigenous works and Indigenous-led research
Background and methodology
We provide a brief overview of the method and project participants, how the actual project came about, and some of the key processes engaged to help inform the reader of the paper’s
methodological development. In order to structure our thinking, we lean heavily on Hindle’s (2004) work on selecting and carrying out qualitative methods, especially due to the unique context of our research. First, the partners in this research project was comprised of an Indigenous non-for-profit organization (IW) and academics at two different universities. The academics were two non-Indigenous scholars from the University of Regina (UofR) and an Indigenous scholar from the University of Northern British Columbia (now at Carleton University). The two sets of academics and IW made up the core of the partnership.

The process employed what can be best described as a methodological cluster of participatory action, (auto) ethnographic and single case study approaches that included storytelling (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Kovach, 2005; Yin, 2002). Furthermore, the research is currently ongoing. The research methods used are well supported by a long history of qualitative research studies that are ultimately dynamic, evolving, historically and theoretically thoughtful, and flexible (Kaplan, 1964). The way the research was mobilized and implemented, while somewhat novel, is deemed appropriate in that it reflects a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Research philosophy</th>
<th>Project specifics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partnership</td>
<td>Local involvement and participation in planning and implementation</td>
<td>conceived by community participation in research design, process and outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Research as a process that enhances community empowerment and moves towards self-determination</td>
<td>communication is continuous and ongoing incorporates and values local knowledge and ongoing experience meets the political/policy needs of the community community participation guides the research process capacity is developed in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community control</td>
<td>Community maintains ownership and control of research process and outcomes</td>
<td>tools developed, the results and the planning belong to the community (not the researcher) process for the community to review, comment on and approve the tools, methods, findings, reports, publications, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual benefit</td>
<td>Working in partnership with and for the community for a mutually beneficial outcome</td>
<td>tangible benefits for the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholism</td>
<td>Use and production of wholistic knowledge</td>
<td>academic outcomes reflect community needs (dissertations, publications, presentations, etc.) value is placed on all forms of knowing: spiritual, cultural, local and academic knowledge transfer is two-way local knowledge is respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Knowledge produced is used for action</td>
<td>results in wholistic knowledge used for action cycle of knowledge to action is continuous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>Commitment to communication, dissemination and knowledge translation of research and results</td>
<td>local colleagues, participants and community members are aware of the project, its progress and results data are readily available and accessible to community members knowledge produced is communicated to participants, community members, policy developers, government officials and academics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Respect for local research philosophy and culture</td>
<td>research philosophy that respects and is compatible with local teachings and culture is maintained local ethical standards are respected and adhered to</td>
</tr>
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Table I. Eight principles of community-based participatory research

Source: Jacklin and Kinoshameg (2008)
community-based participatory research partnership that was focused on better understanding Indigenous-led research. Therefore, the outcomes are influenced by, and a reflection of, the concepts built upon and mapped through the experiences reported in this case.

There were three main forms of sampling and data collection that consisted of: first, autoethnographic narrative (the actual experiences as viewed by the authors and the reflexive and iterative processes that took place); second, several projects undertaken by IW; and, third, a discussion forum represented the culmination of the research process. Five iterative project stages were identified that constituted sample selection that led to this paper: (i) preparing IW to qualify for SSHRC grant funding, (ii) applying for a special call SSHRC Connections grant, (iii) implementing the Connections grant focused on Indigenous-led research and the issue of Indigenous/corporate engagement, (iv) writing a position paper for SSHRC on the outcomes of the Connections grant and (v) developing the SSHRC position paper into an academic journal article. The last stage involved two further sub-stages, the writing of the first paper and the eventual revision process. The latter part of stage five resulted in the eventual distilling of the objectives that resulted in the final methodological structure, as well as the theoretical findings.

IW (formerly the Aboriginal Human Resource Council) was established in 1998 as a not-for-profit organization with a mandate “to increase the engagement of Indigenous people in the Canadian economy.” Under the leadership of its Board of Directors, IW has spent the last 20 years learning about the complex landscape which characterizes working relationships between Indigenous organizations and corporate Canada. IW has been ISO certified since 2010, one of only a few Indigenous organizations in Canada to have that accreditation. For over 20 years, they have worked with a strong group of willing and supportive companies which they refer to as their Leadership Circle partners. These Indigenous and non-Indigenous companies and organizations have supported their work with annual donations and funding. Since 2005, private sector and government funding has supported their mandate which has benefited Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and corporations and promoted inclusivity, engagement and reconciliation to organizational leaders and the boards of public, private, labour, NGO and philanthropic sectors across Canada.

Since it was first established in 1998, IW has moved through three distinct phases in its development. Stage One, IW was known as Aboriginal Human Resource Council whose mandate was to advance the full labour market participation of Indigenous peoples in Canada and around the world. During the first 10 years of operation, it developed and delivered multi-million-dollar, multi-party labour market projects which increased Indigenous community employment in the skilled trades occupations. Their national trades agenda resulted in more than 450 Indigenous people becoming apprentices and more than 1,200 choosing careers in the trades. They learned the value and importance of being the intermediary, occupying the ethical space described above, to bridge and coordinate resources offered by Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, companies, employment organizations, post-secondary institutions, labour and government agencies and encouraged innovative collaborations focused on the design of more effective community-based labour market ecosystems.

In response to the changing conditions and socio-economic needs of Indigenous communities in Canada, Stage 2 was marked by a shift in focus to the role of workplace inclusion, looking at the ways in which companies develop recruitment, advancement and retention strategies and the role that inclusive workplaces play in achieving better results in those areas. They initiated Indigenous-led research initiatives and developed Indigenous workplace inclusion metrics based on a model they developed from their research labeled the “Inclusion Continuum.” This model has been very influential and widely used with Canada’s largest corporations. Stage 3 marked the organization’s evolution into Indigenous Works (IW) (November 2016) as a response to new and emerging needs expressed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations for an
Indigenous-led organization that would consider the total relationship between non-Indigenous companies and Indigenous people, businesses and communities in Canada.

**Mapping Indigenous Works and Two-Eyed Seeing**

IW has the ability to gather people and to create the conditions under which Two-Eyed Seeing can be encouraged. It manages a complex and growing network of relationships with the banking and financial sectors such as BMO, Vancity, RBC financial, Deloitte, HSBC, Scotiabank, TD Bank and Macquarie Group; with key strategic channel partners that include the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Retail Council and Mitacs; and with Indigenous economic development corporations and academic partnerships that include researchers from the UofR, University of Saskatchewan and Carleton University (Lendsay, 2019). Kelly Lendsay and Craig Hall view partnerships as a fundamental first step in building mutual benefits through the development of inclusive engagements across sectors thereby facilitating growth of Indigenous local economies and increasing Indigenous participation in the mainstream economy (Hall, 2019; Lendsay, 2019).

IW is actively challenging the old paradigm of research on and for Indigenous peoples upon which outsider Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers built their careers by arriving in and taking knowledge from Indigenous communities and contributing nothing beneficial to community self-determination or socio-economic well-being. (Shaw et al., 2006, p. 273). Through creating safe spaces for dialogue and action that bridges Indigenous, academic, corporate, entrepreneurial and government communities, IW is co-generating understanding and commitment to its vision for Indigenous engagement and research that makes strong contributions to the socio-economic well-being of not only Indigenous communities but of Canada as a whole.

**University of Saskatchewan**

In collaboration with the University of Saskatchewan, IW co-created a multiphase research project to understand the nature of Indigenous and corporate partnerships. Specifically, the longer-term objective was to develop an auditable partnership benchmarking system, which could be used to identify the strengths and gaps that exist with companies’ and Indigenous communities’ capacities to maximize the opportunities presented by major project partnerships (Lendsay et al., 2019). IW recognizes that research must be conducted with and by, and not just about or on Indigenous communities and that effective collaboration with Indigenous communities requires an Indigenous research paradigm that legitimizes Indigenous approaches to doing research and to interpreting results. Consequently, the project was designed to identify and describe an Indigenous research methodology that would promote community control (cf. Peltier, 2018; Jacklin and Kinoshameg, 2008) and be used for the broader benchmarking project. The development of a framework was needed to enable companies looking at potential resource project sites to have a way of assessing what capacities Indigenous communities would need to develop to maximize opportunities cited in project-related agreements. The project generated knowledge into the social, economic and environmental systems and structures necessary to enhance partnership success (Lendsay et al., 2019). This included an examination of the organizational capacities needed by developer companies to assist Indigenous communities in preparing for major projects, and in understanding which engagement strategies Indigenous communities would need to implement to develop the organizational strengths required to maximize opportunities.

The research drew from knowledge and perspectives shared by Indigenous business leaders during Indigenous Works’ (2018) “Inclusion Works” forum, which gathered Indigenous and mainstream business partners in a safe space to discuss how to improve Indigenous inclusion in the workplace (Lendsay et al., 2019). The Inclusion Works gathering drew together representatives from more than 150 leading Indigenous and corporate
partnerships. The meetings advocated that increased Indigenous workplace inclusion benefits Canada and all Canadians. Plenary sessions, break-out discussions and speeches were recorded and transcribed. Participants were encouraged to share perspectives on key partnership competencies. Speakers shared personal experiences, proffered advice and reflected upon the successes and failures they had experienced in all phases of their respective partnership journeys. The transcripts of these sessions became a rich source of data concerning the types of competencies required to build and maintain sustainable community partnerships (Lendsay et al., 2019).

**Mitacs**
Mitacs is a national, not-for-profit organization that has designed and delivered research and training programs in Canada for 20 years. They work with 60 universities, 4,000 companies, and both federal and provincial governments, to build partnerships that support industrial and social innovation in Canada (Mitacs, 2019). IW and Mitacs co-hosted two forums designed to bring together the Indigenous business community with university and college researchers to explore ways to increase and support research collaborations. The overarching objective of these gatherings was to share ideas and strategize with leaders in the Indigenous business community about opportunities to define new areas of research and to develop and support the strategies needed to grow those opportunities in new and innovative ways. Participants were able to network and learn from academics and Indigenous leaders about their areas of interest and expertise and meet senior management from Indigenous economic development corporations to gain insights into community development and the role that research might play in stimulating growth and socio-economic well-being. Throughout 2019, IW and Mitacs collaborated on a process to gather information, conduct research, engage and consult, design and produce a strategy document to inform their partnership priorities for the future.

**British Columbia transportation and warehousing**
The Linkages Project was funded by Employment and Social Development Canada and managed by IW in collaboration with industry, Indigenous communities and other partners. The research demonstrated that Indigenous people have not played a substantial role in the British Columbia warehousing and transportation sectors. Companies in the sector identified that the main barriers inhibiting Indigenous people from participating in the industry were related to lack of experience, inadequate education and training, and to the associated costs of onboarding new Indigenous employees who are often not in possession of the required basic skills. The sector struggled to recruit Indigenous candidates because there was a lack of data on the diverse geographical distribution of the Indigenous population throughout British Columbia, as well as the numbers of Indigenous people located in the urban areas of the lower mainland. IW identified a need to develop common understandings of the issues facing Indigenous recruitment in this sector and that an engagement, recruitment and retention strategy would have to be developed to address the needs of the future Indigenous employees and sector employers. Finally, their research advocated for creative approaches to industry/education training and development collaborations to benefit both sector players and Indigenous students. They identified the need for post-secondary institutions to evaluate their offerings in partnership with Indigenous training organizations and for the sector to fully address the sector skills needs of Indigenous employees. IW further determined that success required working closely with employers, secondary and post-secondary schools, Indigenous training providers, industry training organizations and government to address both Indigenous and sector training needs.
Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and banking funded forum

Indigenous Works (2017b) completed a study of 511 medium and large-sized Canadian companies on the nature and extent of the companies’ engagement with Indigenous communities and Indigenous economic development activities in Canada. The findings demonstrated that 85 percent of non-Indigenous corporations were “disengaged” and had no credible plans for working with Indigenous people, their businesses and organizations and that only 28 percent of these corporations were aware of the TRC’s Call to Actions regarding reconciliation (Indigenous Works, 2017b). They found that there was a lack of awareness on the part of companies about Indigenous socio-economic objectives and activities and on how to engage with Indigenous people in building mutually beneficial business ventures and partnerships (Indigenous Works, 2017b).

This led to the partnership (set out above in five stages) among the academic institutions and IW to develop a new forum focused more specifically on engagement and business transition strategies for Indigenous and non-Indigenous companies and most importantly, a bounded session that explored the concept of Indigenous-led research[1]. This forum was sponsored by SSHRC, RBC Financial, BDC and Vancity. It gathered together Indigenous leaders of economic development corporations, representatives from the financial sector, academics and others to discuss corporate and Indigenous engagement issues. It examined the prospect of designing Indigenous-focused succession strategies for SMEs and their owners who are nearing retirement age and the role played by the financial sector in facilitating this. Extended discussions focused on how partners could assist IW in framing a multi-year Indigenous-led research project and the deeper engagement work needed to catalyze corporate and Indigenous relationships, especially in disengaged sectors. Participants involved in Indigenous economic development expressed the view that, to increase Indigenous social and economic well-being, there was a strong need for increased community engagement (Indigenous Works, 2017b, 2018). IW identified the need to design and implement engagement strategies which would promote an authentic commitment for Indigenous economic development ventures and non-Indigenous corporations to work together in cooperative and productive ways. They also identified that corporate and Indigenous relationships and engagements evolve via stages of development, characterized by different kinds of expectations, challenges and outcomes. How Indigenous organizations and mainstream companies can successfully work together and bring value to each other’s enterprises is a subject which needs much more research because little is understood about what constitutes success or failure in these types of partnerships.

Discussion

From the work detailed above, IW has developed an inclusive vision that involves defining culturally relevant methodologies and shaping Indigenous ethical protocols that enable Indigenous-led research, by Indigenous researchers (and/or their allies) and with Indigenous communities, that is responsive and accountable to Indigenous communities and their socio-economic and research needs (cf. Held, 2019; Wright et al., 2019; Latulippe, 2015; Bartlett et al., 2012; Martin, 2012; Smith, 2012; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2009; Shaw et al., 2006). The four examples presented above demonstrate how IW is creating an ethical space of Two-Eyed Seeing to give voice and safety to the diverse ways of knowing required to facilitate substantial and sustained understandings between the cultures, knowledge systems and worldviews of Indigenous community members, researchers and sector organizations. Mutually beneficial relationships evolve from IW’s engagement processes that include Indigenous peoples and academic and/or sector partners in setting the agenda (deciding which issues are important), decision-making (determining which approaches and perspectives should prevail) and research context (setting the stage for action) (see Figure 4).
IW’s engagement process draws on their knowledge of and openness to cultural differences and flexibility in response to diverse Indigenous and non-Indigenous practices, priorities and protocols. It is an iterative process across four discrete stages: Pre-planning, Planning, Implementation and Monitoring and Evaluation. The pre-planning stage involves developing insights and understandings into the particular values, beliefs, traditions, culture, history, politics, traditional territories, regional dynamics and language of the Indigenous communities and/or Indigenous organizations being engaged. The planning stage involves building on insights gained during pre-planning to identify the most appropriate focus for community-based research – research protocols, ethics, tools and methodologies to use for effective implementation of the research agenda moving forward. This includes defining and articulating the relationship between Indigenous communities, researchers and Indigenous ventures and non-Indigenous researchers, academic institutions and corporations; identifying and defining goals and objectives and assessing overall measures of success; and communicating with newly identified partners, collaborators and co-applicants to invite participation on forums and roundtables. The implementation stage involves acting on the planning stage to formalize the partnership in the research project – moving from ideas to action. This requires coordinating the participation of all proposed Indigenous community partners, academic and sector collaborators, gaining the commitment of new ones to foster commitment and engagement and facilitating common understandings of key research issues, challenges and processes. This includes formalizing and securing financial, intellectual and other relevant contributions and commitments from all identified partners and collaborators. Finally, the monitoring and evaluation stage involves understanding what progress is being made according to IW’s understandings of the partnership research plan and through anticipating and addressing any challenges that
might arise. This involves analyzing progress against stated goals and objectives and assessing overall success via the evaluation criteria developed in the planning stage through forums and roundtables and communicating with partners, Indigenous communities and sector collaborators.

In hosting the forums, setting the agendas and leading research in consultation with their partners and Leadership Circle, IW is centering power within Indigenous communities, institutions and organizations. It intuitively and tacitly understands the need to foster, promote and engage with Indigenous research paradigms in their work to ensure that research projects are managed jointly to enable researchers and communities to undertake research that is respectful, reciprocal and mutually beneficial. While IW would not overtly identify their engagement strategies using the eight principles of community-based participatory action (Jacklin and Kinoshameg, 2008, p. 59), much of their work addresses each of the eight principles discussed. IW generates Indigenous-led research that enhances community empowerment and helps communities move toward self-determination through identifying engagement gaps, opportunities for Indigenous partnerships or through mobilizing research that addresses the political/policy needs of the community – engagement scores across sectors, for example, or labour market strategies that promote the recruitment and retention of Indigenous employees.

Furthermore, in the spirit of Two-Eyed Seeing, IW’s ongoing partnerships with academic institutions and government agencies has exposed them to partners’ and collaborators’ ways of knowing and being that has sensitized them to other knowledge systems, values, theories and methodologies. For example, recent work with partners on transition and succession strategies has led to a better understanding of research opportunities, implementation, knowledge production and action pertaining to corporate engagement with SMEs and banks. Exposure to new theories such as institutional logics and how it may seamlessly be used with Two-Eyed Seeing principles has broadened their partners’ and collaborators’ structural understanding of the logics and values that drive certain institutions, and has provided cautionary best practices for Indigenous-led research projects that seek to partner with a wide spectrum of partners and collaborators.

IW’s ongoing community participation through forums and roundtables guides the research process and enables industry, academic, funding and sector partners to review, comment on and examine Indigenous-centric tools, methods and findings which are mobilized in reports and publications. IW maintains ownership and control of research process, outcomes and data collected. Any tools or methodologies that have been developed through the research process belong to IW and not the researcher or their partners and these are used to facilitate actions that promote reconciliation, increase corporate engagement with Indigenous communities, and promote labour strategies that are mutually beneficial to Indigenous peoples and sectors across Canada. This is a wholistic process that ensures that all knowledge systems are valued and that findings are communicated back to Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, partners and sector collaborators. Clearly, knowledge produced is used for action through the development of tools such as Inclusion Continuum Workplace Model, Seven-Stage Partnership Model, Benchmarking and Assessment tools, Reconciliation Index Score as well as custom corporate and sector reports.

**Conclusion**

This paper demonstrates how and why Two Row Wampum and Two-Eyed Seeing can be combined into a decolonizing methodology and how these concepts are practiced by IW to promote a critical Indigenous research paradigm. Through creating an ethical space for dialogue and action that bridges Indigenous, academic, corporate, entrepreneurial and government communities, IW demonstrates how to enable inclusive, respectful and reciprocal relations. The Indigenous-led research protocols that IW has pioneered occur at a time of
reconciliation where there is a need to replace old economistic paradigms in favour of humanistic or Indigenous approaches that are responsive to communities’ cultural, social, economic and environmental values and highlight Indigenous ways knowing and being. This approach means engaging with Indigenous ventures, non-Indigenous corporations, communities and governments across Canada to promote meaningful research collaborations and partnerships that address the TRC’s Calls to Action and act on reconciliation to facilitate increased economic self-sufficiency as a means of greater self-determination for Indigenous communities. Their research is strongly aligned with SSHRC’s future challenge areas in that it directly addresses how generating insights into the experiences and aspirations of Indigenous peoples, their communities and Indigenous ways of organizing economic development activities are essential to building innovative ventures and partnerships whose outcomes will contribute to self-determination and to the socio-economic well-being of Indigenous communities and all Canadians.

Since its inception IW has undertaken more than 150 projects including a series of “firsts.” It was the first Indigenous organization in Canada to develop a web-based Indigenous job board, the “Inclusion Network,” which not only created matches between Indigenous job applicants and corporate Canada, but also produced a rich set of metrics that brought new precision to Indigenous talent acquisition. They developed a comprehensive metrics-rich workplace inclusion model called the “Inclusion Continuum” which provided an Indigenous perspective on what constitutes “inclusion” in the workplace and how to measure it. IW developed systems for the Guiding Circles program that resulted in the delivery of this career planning tool to over 2,000 practitioners in remote Indigenous communities across the country, providing the means for Indigenous youth to acquire the skills and competencies needed to identify and develop viable career paths based on their innate talents and using Indigenous teachings as a basis for their empowerment. These and many other projects have affirmed IW’s dedication to community-based participatory action research and knowledge mobilization and contributed to its role acting as a policy advocate to all levels of government in Canada and, as a leader in cross-sector program design, development and delivery. In facilitating an ethical space and acting on Two-Eyed Seeing they have made positive contributions to Canada’s economy through bridging the knowledge systems of Indigenous ventures, Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, governments and leaders. As an Indigenous-led organization working across sectors they are in a unique position to generate important cross-sector (i.e. Indigenous communities, Indigenous economic ventures, Indigenous and non-Indigenous corporations, industry, governments, etc.) understanding. Their strength lies in their ability to identify overlapping interests and values across sector partners and collaborators, to identify the common ground for partnership, to reconstruct partners’ ideas and visions, reorganize assets in new and innovative ways and then to mobilize the partnership to achieve stronger results, impacts and outcomes.

Indigenous Works’ approach to the methodological development of Indigenous-led research through the mapping provided in this paper involves (i) recognizing the community as an equal partner, (ii) building on community strengths and resources, (iii) promoting co-learning among partners in the research project, (iv) balancing research and action for the mutual benefit of all, (v) emphasizing the relevance of community-defined problems, (vi) employing a cyclical and iterative process to develop and maintain community/research partnerships, (vii) disseminating knowledge gained from the project to all involved partners and (viii) securing the long-term commitment of all partners and collaborators (Holkup et al., 2004, pp. 2-3). The key is in creating an ethical space of Two-Eyed Seeing to give voice and safety to the diverse ways of knowing required to facilitate substantial and sustained understandings between the cultures, knowledge systems and worldviews of Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members,
researchers and sector organizations (Peltier, 2018, p. 4; Evans et al., 2009; Jacklin and Kinoshameg, 2008). This is characterized by commitments: to social transformation; to honoring the lived experience and knowledge of the participants and community involved; and to collaboration and power sharing in the research (Reason, 1994 cited in Evans et al., 2009, p. 896; Jacklin and Kinoshameg, 2008). Through identifying, developing and supporting research partnerships and practices grounded on respectful relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, IW acts on its commitment to facilitating research by, with and for Indigenous peoples based on the open exchange of views and active engagement across Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners, contributors and collaborators, in an academically and ethically sound manner. As an Indigenous-led organization, IW’s research protocols recognize the importance of work that is ethically and philosophically congruent with Indigenous peoples’ worldviews. Through engaging in Two-Eyed Seeing, they recognize the importance of understanding and bridging diverse perspectives and values. The IW case is thus a fitting example of the type of organizations that will play a growing role as a facilitator of Indigenous-led research. The guidelines developed based on principles of Two-Eyed Seeing will ultimately provide insight and evidence-based methodological principles for other organizations that seek to weave together different knowledge systems while advocating for and providing value to, Indigenous communities.

Note

References


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