

The Medicine Wheel & Art Therapy: Indigenous research methodology

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Benefits of the Medicine Wheel and Art Therapy approach

- provides best practices in creating cultural safety and humility
- addresses cultural disruption and historical and current issues stemming from oppression and trauma
- utilizes traditional healing to bring cultural safety to address many current issues
 - of alcohol and substance use
 - of loss and grief
 - of restorative justice
 - of depression and suicidal ideation
- supports Indigenous individuals, families and communities in healing
- promotes coming into balance and respectful relationship with "all my relations"
 - addresses issues of physical and mental health and promotes spiritual health and well being
- restores health and well-being in community
- provides support for professionals to listen to their heart.

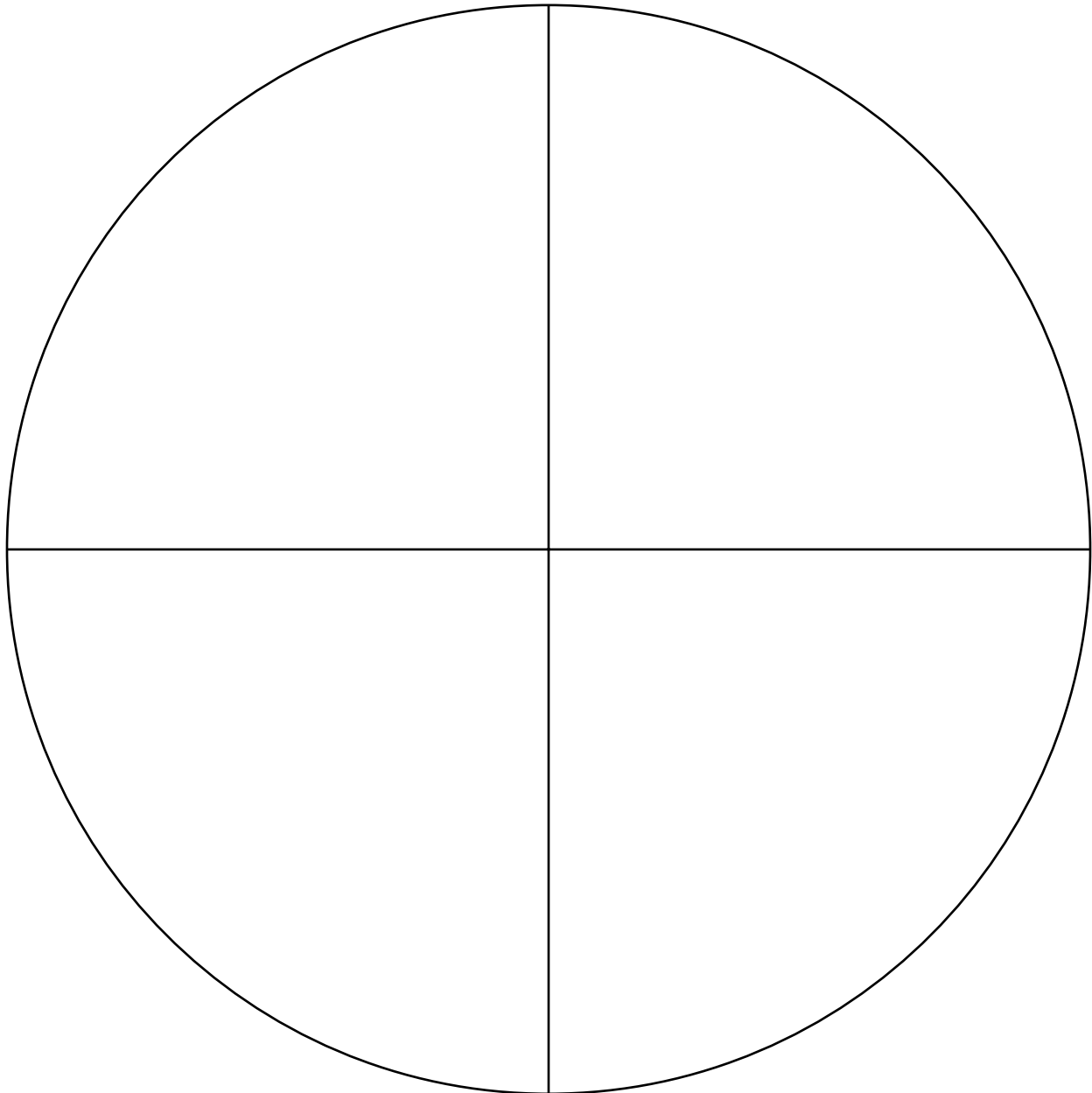
World view of the Medicine Wheel

"A traditional understanding of healing implies more than an understanding of holistic health. It flows from knowledge of the inter-relatedness of everything. Health arises from all aspects of life being in right relationship. Sickness arises from disruption, or imbalance. Any method or technique that ignores the foundation of respectful, balance with all aspects of life will have limited benefit." (Wabigon & Wenger-Wabigon, 2012, p. 51)

The North American Medicine Wheel

Quadrants

1. East, yellow, physical, air, new beginnings, illumination, child and adolescent
2. South, red, emotional, water, love, growth, adolescent and young adult
3. West, black, mental, fire, twilight, maturity, strength, adult
4. North white, spiritual, purity, earth, elders and new born



Medicine Wheel Spirit Paths

With each of the spirit path rocks one can reflect on how the value / concepts affects you or your client (spiritually, physically, emotionally or mentally).

North – spirit path

“The gift of Waboose, the white buffalo, is the gift of healing our physical being and our way of relating to the world. This the healing that allows us to let go of disease and accept health.” (Sun Bear, 1991, p. 48).

Spirit path rock # 25 Cleansing

Spirit path rock # 26 Renewal

Spirit path rock # 27 Purity

East – spirit path

“The gift of Wabun, the golden eagle is healing the mental being that allows us to see the truth and to let go of the lies we have been told and have accepted in our own minds.” (Sun Bear, 1991, P. 49)

Spirit path rock # 28 Clarity

Spirit path rock # 29 Wisdom

Spirit path rock #30 Illumination

South – spirit path

South is the direction to go when “you want to receive healing of your heart. It is the direction to go to give thanks for the relationships or to ask for help with relationships. (Sun Bear, 1991, p. 51)

Spirit path rock #31 Growth

Spirit path rock # 32 Trust

Spirit path rock #33 Love

West – spirit path

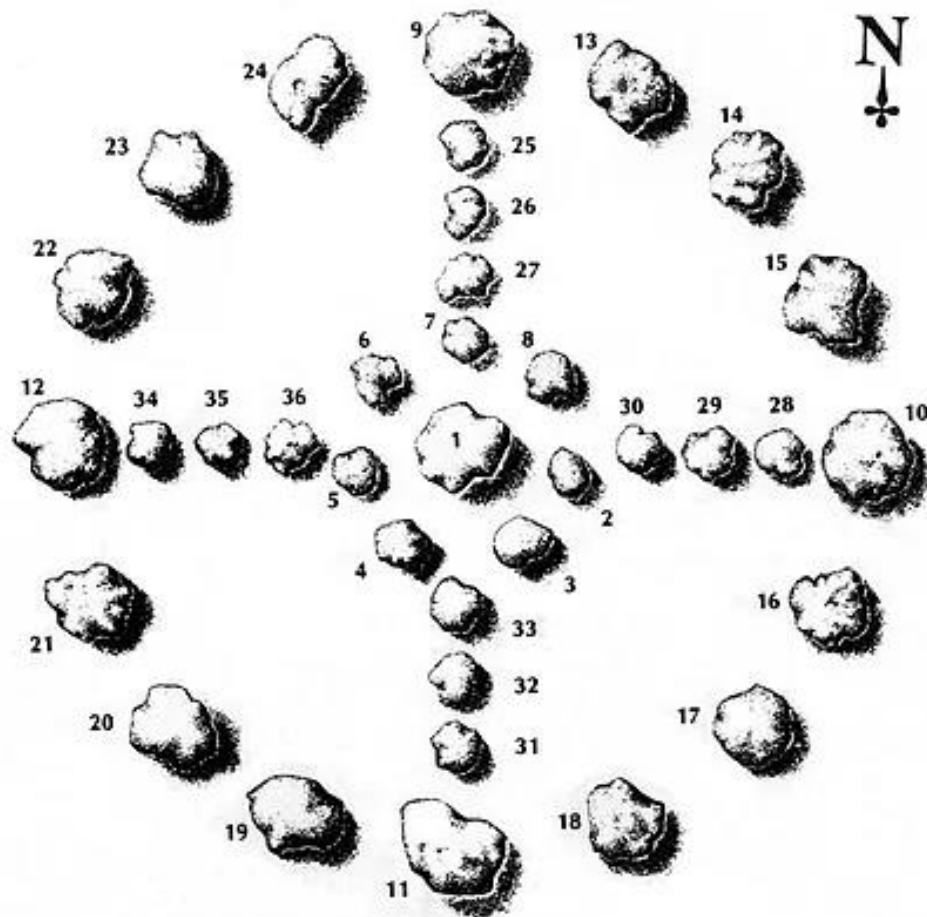
The west is the path for healing on the spiritual aspects of life. It shows what is sacred to you and the universe. It is the place to go for knowledge about ceremony and the sacred. (Sun Bear, 1991)

Spirit path rock # 34 Experience

Spirit path rock #35 Introspection

Spirit path rock # 36 Strength

SUN BEAR'S MEDICINE WHEEL



1. Creator (Any & All Colors)
2. Earth Mother (Forest Green)
3. Father Sun (Sky Blue)
4. Grandmother Moon (Silver/White)
5. Turtle (Green/Brown)
6. Frog (Blue/Green)
7. Thunderbird (Red)
8. Butterfly (Translucent w/Blue)
9. Waboose (White Buffalo/White)
10. Wabun (Golden Eagle/Gold & Red)
11. Shawnoese (Coyote/ Yellow & Green)

12. Mudjekeewis (Grizzly Bear/Blue & Black)
13. Snow Goose (Translucent/White)
14. Otter (Silver)
15. Cougar (Turquoise)
16. Red Hawk (Yellow)
17. Beaver (Blue)
18. Deer (White & Green)
19. Flicker (Pink)
20. Sturgeon (Red)
21. Brown Bear (Purple)
22. Raven (Brown)
23. Snake (Orange)
24. Elk (Black)
25. Raccoon - Cleansing (Pale Green)

26. Earthworm - Renewal (Dk. Green)
27. Dolphin - Purity (Translucent/White)
28. Hummingbird - Clarity (Clear)
29. Owl - Wisdom (Jade Green)
30. Firefly - Illumination (Fluorescent)
31. Rabbit - Growth (Violet)
32. Salmon - Trust (Lavender)
33. Wolf - Love (Rose)
34. Whale - Experience (Steel Gray)
35. Mouse - Introspection (Royal Blue)
36. Ant - Strength (Golden Yellow)

(The above diagram can be found in: *Dancing With the Wheel - The Medicine Wheel Workbook*, by Sun Bear, Wabun Wind and Crystals Mulligan, Pub by Fireside Books, Copyright 1991)

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| | | | |
| Axiology | Ontology | Epistemology | Methodology |
| What is the nature of ethical behavior? | What is the nature of existence or how do we see reality? | What is the nature of knowledge? How do we see the relation between knower & would-be-known? | What is the approach to systematic inquiry? |
| Community rapport & reciprocity | Multiple Social constructed | Interactive link between researcher & participant | Qualitative Subjective / lived Interpretive / dialectical |
| Balanced representation of views Promotion of human experience | Social positioning Some versions of reality might be privileged and have consequences | Co-created Socially and historically situated | Descriptive Contextualized |
| Promotion of social justice | | Address issues of power & trust | Process oriented Dialogic |
| Indigenous research methodologies | Research is ceremony Everything is relational “all my relations” | Based on a set of relationships; Systems of knowledge are all in context, in relationships | The researcher is inseparable from the subject of the research. |
| Maintaining relational accountability & reciprocity | Process of relationships to form a mutual reality -multiple realities | Relational Respect Reciprocity Responsibility Relational accountability and methodology | Interpretation must be respectful; one must build relationship and there is vested interest in the integrity of the methodology |
| Obligations and meaning forms in the research relationship and one must be accountable to your relations | “Our ontology is the relationships” | | |
| Will the results be useful to the indigenous community? | | | |

Stones of the Medicine Wheel

| | Stone | Sacred Element | Totem Animals | Sacred Mineral |
|-----|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | Creator stone | All elements | Any & all animals | Any and all minerals |
| 2. | Earth Mother | earth | Tortoise | clay |
| 3. | Father sun | Fire & air | Lizard | geode |
| 4. | Grandmother moon | Water | Loon | Moonstone |
| 5. | Turtle clan | Earth | Turtle | Petrified wood |
| 6. | Frog clan | Water | Frog | River rock |
| 7. | Thunderbird clan | Fire | Thunderbird | Lava rock |
| 8. | Butterfly clan | Air | Butterfly | Azurite |
| 9. | Spirit keeper: north | Earth | White buffalo | Alabaster |
| 10. | Spirit keeper: east | Air | Eagle | Pipestone |
| 11. | Spirit keeper: south | Water | Coyote | Serpentine |
| 12. | Spirit keeper: west | Fire | Grizzly bear | Soapstone |
| 13. | Earth renewal moon | Turtle clan | Snow goose | Quartz |
| 14. | Rest & cleansing moon | Butterfly clan | Otter | Silver |
| 15. | Big winds moon | Frog clan | Cougar | Turquoise |
| 16. | Budding trees moon | Thunderbird clan | Red-hawk | Fire Opal |
| 17. | Frogs return moon | Turtle clan | Beaver | Chrysocolla |
| 18. | Corn planting moon | Butterfly clan | Deer | Agate |
| 19. | Strong sun moon | Frog clan | Flicker | Carnelian Agate |
| 20. | Ripe berries moon | Thunderbird clan | Sturgeon | Garnet & iron |
| 21. | Harvest moon | Turtle clan | Brown bear | Amethyst |
| 22. | Ducks fly moon | Butterfly clan | Raven | Jasper |
| 23. | Freeze up moon | Frog clan | Snake | Copper & malachite |
| 24. | Long snows moon | Thunderbird clan | Elk | Obsidian |
| 25. | Cleansing stone | Spirit path | Raccoon | Sodalite |
| 26. | Renewal stone | Spirit path | Earthworm | Peridot |
| 27. | Purity stone | Spirit path | Dolphin | Herkimer diamond |
| 28. | Clarity stone | Spirit path | Hummingbird | Mica |
| 29. | Wisdom stone | Spirit path | Owl | Jade |
| 30. | Illumination stone | Spirit path | Firefly | Calcite |
| 31. | Growth stone | Spirit path | Rabbit | Fluorite |
| 32. | Trust stone | Spirit path | Salmon | Lepidolite |
| 33. | Love stone | Spirit path | Wolf | Rose quartz |
| 34. | Experience stone | Spirit path | Whale | hematite |
| 35. | Introspection stone | Spirit path | Mouse | Lapis lazuli |
| 36. | Strength stone | Spirit path | Ant | Amber |

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Indigenous Research Methods

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Research is Ceremony

“Research is all about unanswered questions , but it also reveals our unquestioned answers.”

- (Wilson, 2008, p. 6)

Key concepts

Relationality – shared aspect of Indigenous ontology and epistemology

Accountability to relationships – pertains to indigenous methodology and axiology

Practice of accountability and relationality

“Indigenous epistemology is all about ideas developing through the formation of relationships. “

(Wilson, 2008, p. 8)

Definition of terms

(Wilson, 2008, p. 33-35)

Research paradigms – sets of assumptions, frameworks and principles to base research on – value laden and based on theory.

Ontology- “theory of the nature of existence, or the nature of reality” “what is real?”

Epistemology – “the study of the nature of thinking or knowing” –how we know that we know or come to know. “How do I know what is real?”

Glossary of terms

Methodology – how knowledge is gained; how “reality” is examined

Axiology- ethics and morals that guide the search for knowledge and judge what knowledge is worthy of searching for.

Indigenous- people who identify as original inhabitants of land

Dominant – European descended culture, euro-centric, Christian, heterosexist, male-dominated.

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| Will the results be useful to the indigenous community? | | | |

The SELF – the individual

Measuring and categorizing

In western philosophy and religion – the individual is the basic building block – in the social movement from feudalism to capitalism – there is the relationship between individuals and groups.

Rousseau and Gauguin – idealized and romanticized the view of indigenous people ‘noble savage’ – set in idyllic nature.

19th century – social Darwinism – questioned whether indigenous people were capable of thought – and developing ‘simple’ ideas about religion. (Smith, 1988)

How do ideas become real?

Through systems of knowledge

Culture formations

Relationships of power

Research assumptions

Western view privileges the fundamental nature of western ideas – with innate superiority;

- Implications and desire to bring progress
 - Spirituality
 - Socially
 - Intellectually
 - Economically

Imperialism & colonialism

Raw materials

Military strength

Knowledge and culture

Relationships between peoples

Imperialism and colonialism: west comes to – SEE; NAME; know.

Principle of Uncertainty

Tofoya (1995, cited in Wilson, 2008) – you can't know the context and the definition of an idea at the same time. The closer you get to defining something the more you lose its context.

Heisenberg, physicist, theory of uncertainty – impossible to know both the velocity and the location of an electron at the same time. (Wilson, 2008, p. 8)

In an oral tradition – the storyteller and the listener shape the content and the process. (Wilson, 2008, p. 9)

Chronology of Aboriginal Research

Terra Nullius phase (1770-1900)

- New world /empty land
- Observations of colonizers
- Aboriginals viewed as barely human
- Focus on control of the land – clearing, etc
- Focus on plants and animals and natural resources.

Traditional Phase (1900-1940)

Invasion of lands

Dispossession of people

Research was colonial designs

Research was never brought back and shared with the people

There was a focus to record cultures that would be lost. (to traditionalize the people)

Assimilation phase (1940-1970)

Non-aboriginal people became experts on aboriginal people.

Dominate culture – white society – took on guardianship and protector roles:

- ❑ 60's scoop
- ❑ Residential schools
- ❑ Removal from cultural influences
- ❑ Australian “stolen generation”

Early Aboriginal Research Phase (1970-1990)

- Still being researched
- Being interpreted
- Perspective of seeing an 'exotic culture and beliefs'
- Felt like the most researched population on earth.

Recent Aboriginal Research Phase (1990-2000)

Recent Aboriginal Research Phase

- challenge to government
- Call for a redress of wrongs
- Beginning of the Indigenous voice
- Indigenous scholars

Development of an Indigenous Paradigm

(Steinhauer, 2001, cited in Wilson, 2008)

1st stage – situated in a western framework; indigenous scholars separated academic lives from Indigenous world view

2nd stage – maintains western influences to avoid marginalization; struggles to be accepted

3rd stage – focus on decolonization – Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) – process of indigenizing western methodologies, but still doesn't focus on what Indigenous methodologies are.

- Key factors – awareness of colonization and firm belief in Indigenous worldviews.

4th Stage in an Indigenous Paradigm

4th stage- conducting own research with an Indigenous paradigm – challenge is to articulate Indigenous research methods (Wilson, 2008, p. 54)

- Honours and explicates own world views
- Own approaches; own data collection methods, based on aboriginal ethical knowledge.

*"If research doesn't change
you as a person, then you
haven't done it right."*

(Wilson, 2008)

Indigenous peoples

Awareness of similarities of experience worldwide

No longer need to use tribally specific or local terms

Indigenous – refers to the original peoples of the world – knowledge bases.

Indigenous scholars are in the process of redefining research and ethical protocols – to find culturally congruent methods.

Indigenous people – approach knowledge and learning through senses and intuition. (Wilson, 2008)

Key difference in the dominant paradigm and indigenous

Knowledge is individual and can be sought and gained.

Knowledge is relational and a shared cosmos – people are answerable to animals, plants, and people “all my relations”

3 R's in research

RESPECT: listening, gifts, honour, behaviour, kindness and courtesy

RECIPROCITY

RELATIONALITY

Principles for Indigenous research (Atkinson, 2001, cited in Wilson, 2008, p. 59)

Indigenous people must approve the research and research methods.

Knowledge of community and individual diversity.

Relationships in community must be built with the principles of reciprocity and responsibility.

Confidentiality, being and feeling safe is central for participants.

Principles cont...

Observation is to be non-intrusive, done with quiet awareness.

Deep listening and intuitive presence.

Reflective and non-judgmental consideration.

Responsibility to act with fidelity to what has been learned.

continued:

Awareness of connections between mind – logic and heart – feelings.

Self-reflective and listening and observing of self in relationship to others.

Acknowledgement of the subjectivity of the researcher.

Awareness of relationships and interconnectivity between all living things.

Principles for indigenous research

Check your heart – for clear motives to benefit everyone involved.

“The foundation of Indigenous research lies within the reality of the lived Indigenous experience.”
(Wilson, 2008, p. 60)

Theories developed or proposed must be based on Indigenous forms of epistemology.

Languages and cultures of Indigenous people are living processes.

Research is ceremony

Ceremony starts long before the event.

Ceremony “is the voice from our ancestors that tell us when it is right and when it is not”

- (Wilson, 2008, p. 61)

4 ways

Choosing topics to research

Methods to collect data and/or build relationships

Method of analyzing what is being learned

Presentation of outcomes of research

- Accountability to community

All aspects require relational accountability: to move in a circle.

Purpose of research

- “relationship that pulls things together”
- “researching the negative focuses on and gives power to disharmony.”
- “important that research leads to positive change in the community.” (Wilson, 2008, p. 110)

How do we choose what to study?

- ❖ Doing research WITH Indigenous people not ON them.
- ❖ Key to having a community relationship.
- ❖ Community needs to lead the research – and to decide what is being researched.
- ❖ Important to look at health not ill health.
- ❖ Important to support well-being, a sense of place and ceremony.

Methods for collecting data and gathering info

Empirical data – from senses

From intuition and inspiration

Like medicine – needs different ways

What is Indigenous research methodologies

Sharing info in a circle to include different vantage points

Data collection

“I think that we need to talk in metaphor. Cause our language is built like metaphor. One word is like a zip file, zip disk the crunches all this information into it.” (Lewis, cited in Wilson, 2008, p. 112)

Sleep on thoughts and dream

If knowledge is formed in relationship it can't be owned (Wilson, 2008, p.114)

Methodology for data collection

Ideas belong to the cosmos and all relationships – you have to build a relationship with an idea – with knowledge

Research is like Columbus – he didn't discover anything – it was already there.

When knowledge is used out of context it is cultural appropriation.

There is guardianship of sacred knowledge and places.

Talking circle as method

Story telling

Personal narrative

Relationship between the storyteller and the analyzer

“Research does not have to be formal. It is a ceremony for improving your relationship with an idea. It takes place everyday and has taken place throughout our history.”

(Stein cited in Wilson, 2008, p.110)

“Research isn’t just like a ceremony, it is a ceremony.”

(Wilson, 2008, p. 124)

Rights of Passage

Research is about being changed by the experience on the inside and on the outside.

Peter (Wilson, 2008. p. 125) “the ceremony is about a story, and for all of those, you just have to let it flow, because it's built on relationships. And when you use a story, your own or others, it's claiming a voice and establishing relationships.”

Qualitative research

Participatory action research – fits well as a constructivist paradigm works

Hermeneutics – encircled within relationships – the hermeneutic circle

Phenomenology: description and being-in-the-world

Ceremony: climax of ceremony when it all comes together and all the connections are made.

Ceremony is about strengthening the connections.

Presentation of research

Ceremony is also about the presentation of knowledge.

Indigenous cultures may have problems with the written form and prefer the oral tradition. A written form will have the ideas in a linear form and may lose its “life” taken out of context.

Relational accountability – includes the researcher to be true to yourself and bring forth your TRUE VOICE.

Ethical review

Dominant system – not allowed to name participants

Indigenous – unethical and dishonouring not to name them – it would be like not citing a source of knowledge, a reference. Participants are passing on knowledge. It is important to consider the nature of the knowledge and if the Elder wants his or her name used.

Analysis of data

Intuitive logic, descriptive phenomenology

Build a relationship with the ideas in multiple ways until you reach a higher state of understanding [grounded theory]

Heuristic – to discover the learning – not to be given answers but to be taken to a place where understanding occurs.

Importance of relationship

Analysis

Western analysis breaks info down into small pieces and then puts them together in a logical order.

Indigenous – you would be destroying all the relationships and you have to look at it as a whole.

Elders often teach by providing small bits of knowledge so that over time the ‘student’ comes to their own understanding. (Wilson, 2008, p. 120)

Metaphors

Circular fishing net – one needs to examine all the knots and strings for it to make any sense.

Indigenous ways of thinking about reality starts with synthesis – which is collaboratively analyzed

Knowledge is a collective development – a construction – not individually owned.

Paradigms

Dominant paradigms – concept of the individual as a source & owner of knowledge.

Indigenous world view – relationships are essential. Knowledge is not owned or discovered – it is a set of relationships which are given a visual / visible form.

Accountability of an oral tradition – storytellers & witnesses

Have to be responsible – to who you share information with

Appropriate time and place

Active listeners receive the story

Listen with an open heart and mind.

Passing on the story – you take on responsibilities.

Storyteller

“For the storyteller to explain too much is not honouring you as the listener. It is removing all responsibility from you to do any learning. The main point of Indigenous discourse is to provide a foundation of platform from which to grow, without putting a ceiling of limit on the amount or direction of that growth. It is your responsibility as a listener to learn and to grow, as you too are accountable to all our relations.” (Wilson, 2008, p. 135)

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