tively its own. The next six chapters are an in-depth look at characteristics familiar to the Nêhiýaw research framework – they are tribal epistemology, decolonizing theory, story as method, self and cultural location, purpose, Indigenous methods, interpretation, and ethics as methodology. The starting place for conceptualizing Indigenous research frameworks is the knowledges.

MARGARET KOVACH, 'INDIGENOUS METHODOLOGIES' (TORONTO: UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS, 2009)

3 Epistemology and Research: Centring Tribal Knowledge

Indigenous scholar Manu Aluli Meyer describes her relationship with epistemology like this: 'Every little thing. I mean, I can see a dead frog on the road, and it relates to epistemology' (2001: 192). It took me a while, but I understand her point of view now. Every decision, every move I have made during my tribal-centred research journey has asked me to consider how it fits with my beliefs about knowledge, the world, and Plains Cree ways of knowing. So much is about epistemology, but knowing this does not make the path clearer.

The deeper that I submerge myself into tribal knowledge systems, the more I resist Western ways of knowing as a given for *all* academic research, even though I know that this demands a long swim against a strong current. I can appreciate Western research methods of coding, bundling, categorizing, and naming according to a set of values and principles to make meaning. My concern is not about organizing knowledge, for Cree society is quite adept at this, but rather it is the worldview, the epistemological underpinning of this organization with which I grapple. For me, epistemology is simultaneously elusive and ubiquitous, woven tightly with a personal identity that shifts over a life span, and though it is holistic it is most often expressed through a cognitive lens. Epistemology and research methodology are a tightly bound, complex partnership. And as Meyer (2004) states, the epistemological presence in life and research permeates. It is frogs everywhere.

As noted earlier in this book, the word *epistemology* is used, as opposed to *ontology* or *cosmology*, because *epistemology* captures the 'self-in-relation' (Graveline, 1998) quality of Indigenous knowledge

systems. This chapter is devoted to epistemology, emphasizing the centrality of tribal epistemologies to Indigenous research frameworks. It is this epistemological foundation that differentiates Indigenous research from Western methodologies. Beginning here provides foundational work for the proceeding chapters on story, purpose, Indigenous methods, and so forth, because they are of Indigenous epistemology. It is pertinent to note that Indigenous knowledges can never be standardized, for they are in relation to place and person. How they integrate into Indigenous research frameworks is largely researcher dependent. At the same time, Indigenous methodologies are founded upon Indigenous epistemology, and they will (or ought to) be evident in such frameworks, revealing shared qualities that can be identified as belonging to an Indigenous paradigm.

In moving from a broad discussion of Indigenous epistemologies, this chapter then focuses on Plains Cree knowledge. The reason for focusing on a specific tribal epistemology is to emphasize how the protocols and customs of a particular tribal group assist in making research decisions. It is also an attempt to ward off a pan-Indigenous approach. The chapter concludes with a conversation with Indigenous researcher Michael Hart, who shares his thoughts on the intersection between Cree knowledges and research.

Indigenous Knowledges and Research

When considering tribal epistemologies, there are many entry points, one of which is commentary on its holistic quality. Descriptive words associated with Indigenous epistemologies include interactional and interrelational, broad-based, whole, inclusive, animate, cyclical, fluid, and spiritual. Tribal knowledge is pragmatic and ceremonial, physical and metaphysical. Indigenous cultures have sophisticated and complex cultural practices to access that which comes from both the ordinary and the extraordinary. It is difficult to define, deconstruct, or compartmentalize the different aspects of knowing ('science,' spirit, inward knowing) within an Indigenous context – reductionist tools seem to not work here. As Battiste and Henderson indicate, 'universal definitions of Indigenous knowledge' do not work well either because the knowledge, particularly the knowledge that originates from the extraordinary, is deeply personal and particular (2000: 36).

The following discussion of Indigenous epistemology emphasizes its non-fragmented, holistic nature, focusing on the metaphysical and pragmatic, on language and place, and on values and relationships. Within Indigenous discourse, these are aspects of Indigenous epistemologies that consistently emerge. They are all bound by the relational. Relationship is not identified as a specific theme because it is wholly integrated with everything else. Indigenous epistemologies live within a relational web, and all aspects of them must be understood from that vantage point. This is but a snapshot. Many books and articles have been written on Indigenous science, providing deep insight into Indigenous epistemologies. The purpose here is not to mirror such depth, but rather to make visible the breadth of holistic epistemologies as they relate to Indigenous research frameworks.

Ermine (1999) suggests that Indigenous knowledges are born of relational knowing, from both inner and outer space. The outer space is the physical world and inner space is where metaphysical knowing resides. Indigenous scholar Marlene Brandt-Castellano identifies Indigenous knowledges as coming from a multitude of sources, including 'traditional teachings, empirical observations, and revelations,' and she goes on to suggest that revelations comprise various sources, including 'dreams, visions, cellular memory, and intuition' (quoted in E. Steinhauer, 2002: 74). Because of the interconnection between all entities, seeking this information ought not to be extractive but reciprocal, to ensure an ecological and cosmological balance. Much insight comes to an individual inwardly and intuitively. There are myriad examples within Indigenous stories and writing that speak of reliance on this source.

Scholarship on Indigenous science, in one manner or another, references the relationship with metaphysics through creation myths, philosophies on space and time, and an energy source that Indigenous people describe as the sacred (Cajete, 1999; Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000; Little Bear, 2000). This suggests that energy reveals itself as knowings stored deep within a collective unconscious and surfaces through dreams, prayer, ceremonial ritual, and happenings (Cardinal, 2001; Ermine, 1999). Suspension of judgment is required for the knowing to surface in its own time (Deloria and Wildcat, 2001).

I can identify this knowledge source in my own life. Early in my research, I had a powerful dream that was particularly relevant. I

knew, culturally, not to dismiss the knowledge coming to me in this form, for within Plains Cree knowledges dreams matter. In conversation with Graham Smith about the intersection between holistic philosophy and research, he said, 'I just see that as part of Indigenous knowledge, frameworks. You need a way to write them in, obviously, but part of the cultural context. I see dreams as being part of oral culture.' He went on to say that the Maori do not have the same traditional beliefs around dreams, but he would not dismiss this as a valid knowledge source. In following tribal paradigms in research, there needs to be space for the choices that will be made in accordance with those paradigms. In choosing Indigenous epistemologies, respect must be paid to their holistic, relational nature. Michael Hart spoke about the range of Cree knowledges: 'It's a lot of reflection back on my time with Elders, with traditional teachers, in ceremony that is my biggest influence. I say ceremonies, because to me I don't hunt so I can't rely on that.' Jeannine Carriere shared the advice given by her Cree colleague: 'Hold your tobacco and see what happens.' All the Indigenous researchers showed respect for holistic knowledges. They held as legitimate inward understanding imbued by spirit.

A holistic orientation is integral, but how do Indigenous researchers apply it to their research? First, they make choices about the knowledge that they will privilege. This cannot be stated more clearly than in Kathy Absolon's words: 'I am an Anishnabe; I want to be an Anishnabe thinker.' Being an Anishnabe or a Nêhiyáw thinker means holding dear a broad range of knowledge, and that one's daily life reflects respect for holism. Privileging tribal epistemology in academic research efforts is easier said than done, but Indigenous researchers are making this choice. Acknowledging these choices and challenges, they are encompassing holism within their research frameworks.

Indigenous researchers are grappling with ways to explain how holistic epistemologies inform their research design in ways understood by Western academic minds. In carrying out her research, Roxanne Struthers (2001) honoured spiritual knowledge by offering a traditional gift of tobacco to her participants, as well as a daily offering of tobacco to the Creator. In preparing herself for the research – gaining guidance as to whether she should continue with her research – she relied on dream knowledge that came to her in the form of three Ojibway grandmothers. Guidance from dreams and spirit became a part of her research. Richard Atleo (2004) introduces the Nuu-chah-nulth method of *Oosumich*, which is a spiritual methodology equivalent to that of a vision quest. He argues that Western methodologies and *Oosumich* belong together because they are two proven methods of accessing information.

The holistic nature of Indigenous science often creates a chasm between it and the beliefs held by Western science. Language bridges gaps by acting as a mechanism to express divergent worldviews. Like inward knowing, language is so powerful because it reminds us who we are; it is deeply entwined with personal and cultural identity. Graham Smith expressed concern about those who were 'claiming Indigenous theorizing' but do not have an appreciation for the nuance of tribal culture that is intricately tied with language. Language matters because it holds within it a people's worldview. Language is a primary concern in preserving Indigenous philosophies, and it is something that must be thought through within research epistemologies.

In connecting language, culture, and knowledge, Anne Waters (2004) offers insights into the structure of Indigenous languages and how form gives rise to a way of thinking and being. Waters suggests that dualist constructs such as like/unlike have resulted in a binary language and thought pattern in European cultures. Conversely, in many Indigenous cultures the language constructs suggest a non-binary, complementary philosophy of the world. Western research that serves to extract and externalize knowledges in categorical groupings aligns well with the categorical premises of Western languages. Inevitably, the question of whether language and method shape thought or thought shapes language and method surfaces. Is it the chicken or the egg? Whatever the causal forces, what can be ascertained is that they live in a profound relationship with each other.

Given the role of language in shaping thought and culture, conflict between Indigenous and Western research approaches (and its involvement in knowledge construction) rests deeply within language and the matter of dualist thought patterns. In tribal epistemologies and Indigenous research frameworks, one must first assert the interrelationship between Indigenous language structure and worldview, and then the manner in which colonialism has interfered with this dynamic. Given this history and interruption, it is no wonder that Indigenous thought tends to dance around the sharp edges of the language binaries that define Western methodologies.

Moving on from linguistic structure and thought, there is also the matter of language, epistemology, and knowledge exchange within Indigenous inquiry. Given the philosophical basis of a complementary, non-binary Indigenous thought pattern, it makes sense that narrative encased in the form of oral history would be the natural means to transmit knowledges (Struthers, 2001). Within the structure of story, there is a place for the fluidity of metaphor, symbolism, and interpretative communications (both verbal and non-verbal) for a philosophy and language that is less definitive and categorical. My sense is that skilled orators, then and now, were able to imbue energy through word choice, and allow listeners to walk inside the story to find their own teachings. The interpretation and the teachings taken become the listener's task. With the listener's involvement, the insight gained from the story is a highly particular and relevant form of knowledge exchange.

An equally important point about language (or vernacular) and knowledge exchange is the ability to make concrete the abstract theoretical findings of research. The skill of making research methodology relevant and interesting to community rests largely with language. The ability to craft our own research stories, in our own voice, has the best chance of engaging others. One strategy is to integrate into our research findings the stories that paint the context of our research. As I write this, I am in Saskatchewan. Being here helps to infuse my thinking and writing with a Great Plains landscape. That a magpie, a thunderstorm, a teepee set against the rolling hills of the Qu'Appelle Valley can make an appearance in my writing seems most possible if I am here. The visitation of anecdotes, metaphors, and stories about place make cerebral, academic language accessible, and reflect holistic epistemologies.

No wonder one of the first approaches to erasing a culture is to attack its language because language holds such insight into the social organization of a people. Without language to affirm knowledge daily, it is easy to lose cultural memory. Milan Kundera, the well-known Czech novelist and philosopher on cultural evolution, has written: 'The first step in liquidating a people ... is to erase its memory ... Before long a nation will begin to forget what it is and what it was. The world around it will forget even faster' (quoted in Dyck, 1986: 132). There is a need for ongoing conversation, such as on the effects of non-fluency on Indigenous epistemologies and research. Many Indigenous people do not know their own language and they

are attempting to relearn. However, it will take a lot of immersion to retrain our minds. How to think and be in a non-binary way is a challenge when we live in a binary world. Because language is central to the construction of knowledge, how are we, as Indigenous researchers, approaching the issue of philosophy and language in our research – beyond identifying its importance? These are ongoing considerations for tribal epistemologies.

Language is a central component of Indigenous epistemologies and must be considered within Indigenous research frameworks (Bishop, 1997; Struthers, 2001; Weaver, 2001; Waters, 2004). Still, linguistic structures associated with tribal languages and the deep interconnection between thought and language cannot be extrapolated from other attributes. Indigenous epistemologies, even within the cerebral-orientated conversation of language structures and their influence on thought, cannot be relegated solely to the cognitive realm. Indigenous epistemologies assume a holistic approach that finds expression within the personal manifestations of culture.

Blackfoot scholar Narcisse Blood once spoke about places as being alive, that they are imbued with spirit and are our teachers. Daniel Wildcat considers how place informs: 'You see and hear things by being in a forest, on a river, or at an ocean coastline; you gain real experiential knowledge that you cannot see by looking at the beings that live in those environments under a microscope or in a laboratory experiment' (in Deloria and Wildcat, 2001: 36). As tribal people, there is an understanding of how to proceed based upon a long history of interrelationship with a particular territory. Place is what differentiates us from other tribal peoples, and what differentiates us from settler societies (including both privileged and marginalized groups). Place gives us identity. A Saskatchewan Cree poet and scholar, Neal McLeod, writes about place and how it allows us to transverse time, giving us an immediate connection to the ancestors and reminding us who we are: 'to the circle of old men speaking / echo of generations / gave form to the moment of my birth' (2005: 23).

Place links present with past and our personal self with kinship groups. What we know flows through us from the 'echo of generations,' and our knowledges cannot be universalized because they arise from our experience with our places. This is why name-place stories matter: they are repositories of science, they tell of relationships, they reveal history, and they hold our identity.

In southern Saskatchewan, there is a well-known name-place legend of how the Qu'Appelle Valley received its name. The most familiar version tells of a love story between a Cree man and woman who were soon to wed. Away from home on a hunting trip, he paddles home to her, for they are to marry the next day. As he is nearing her home, he hears a voice calling out his name. He responds *Kâ-têpwêt* (who calls?) in Cree, then *Qu'appelle?* in French, but there is no reply, so he travels on. He arrives at her home and finds her family grieving. They tell him that she has left for the spirit world, but add, 'Twice did she call for thee last night.' Pauline Johnson, a Mohawk poet, wrote *The Legend of Fort Qu'Appelle*, based on a story handed down from the old people of this region. Although there are different versions, this legend, with its tinge of frontier romanticism, is 'likely misinterpreted from a story told by the Indians' (Lerat and Ungar, 2005: 17). Even so, its haunting sadness casts a line back through time to the ancestors. There is an alternate version of how Qu'Appelle got its name. According to this story, 'two groups of people arrived on opposite sides of the Qu'Appelle and since they could not get across to visit, they shouted news across the water, and that is how the river got its name' (ibid.). Either way, these stories situate us in place, they localize history and maintain an oral tradition of passing on knowledge.

Place names make theoretical notions concrete; they offer us tacit meaning. Stories, like name-place legends, give comfort and grounding, and offer the warmth of belonging. It is from here that we can reach out to the world. Stories connected to place are both about collectivist tribal orientation, and they are located within our personal knowing and conceptual framework of the world. Michael Hart reminds us that there is a web of interconnection that forms our way of knowing. He acknowledges the epistemological interrelationship between people, place, language, and animals, and how they influence our coming to know. He acknowledges many gifts from many places and that 'place is key but it is only one component.' From a holistic epistemology, one relationship is not more significant than another. Rather, it is a balance of all. Relational balance is holistic epistemology.

Indigenous epistemologies are action-oriented. They are about living life every day according to certain values. Reflecting on an Indigenous mindset, Leroy Little Bear characterizes the ideal Native American personality as one who is kind, who puts the group first, who is friendly, who 'is steeped in spiritual and ritual knowledge,' who is easygoing and has a good sense of humour (quoted in Alfred, 2005: 10). Inherent within this perspective is knowledge and action in relationship with the world. This reflects a holistic, value-based knowledge system that consistently returns to the responsibilities of maintaining good relations.

Miýo, Cree for good, is an integral quality and a manifestation of holistic, relational epistemology. *Miýo* is about sharing and generosity, respecting the earth and all its inhabitants, working hard, and caring for other people. These qualities are about *miýo-wîcêhtowin* (good relations), which is the heartbeat of the Plains Cree culture. Irene Calliou, a Métis Elder, remembers her Cree grandmother speaking of how these values were part of daily practices: 'My grandmother used to dig up medicinal roots; and once she dug them up, she placed tobacco there [in the hole]. I did not know then why she put tobacco in' (quoted in Ahenakew and Wolfart, 1998: 157). Calliou tells us of showing respect for the earth, of reciprocity, and of the importance of observation and attentiveness in learning as knowledge is transmitted through kinship relationships. The importance of land is tied with the value of collective responsibility and stewardship. A prevailing teaching is that an Indigenous research framework must not solely be an intellectual construct, for it cannot be understood in the absence of its practical manifestations, which involve living life in a way that reflects goodness, that reflects *miýo*.

Indigenous researchers are incorporating tribal epistemologies into their research. What seems equally evident is that these researchers are taking action in at least two ways: (a) they acknowledge the breadth of tribal epistemologies, their relational and holistic qualities, and their necessity; and (b) they *use* tribal epistemologies in preparation for and conducting their research, in documenting the sources and methods of their knowing, and in acknowledging their influence on their research.

Nêhiýaw Epistemology

The following is a small offering on Nehiýaw (Plains Cree) knowledge. The purpose of integrating Nêhiýaw epistemology as part of a chapter on Indigenous epistemologies is to illustrate how a specific tribal epistemology is both aligned with and differentiated from a broader discussion of Indigenous epistemology. Although the themes are similar – place and language, to name two – they are manifested (and pre-

sented) through Plains Cree custom and practice. Within an Indigenous research framework, researchers would present their interpretation of the tribal epistemology guiding their research, and they would each do so in her or his own way.

I start this section with a historic practice emerging from place. It exemplifies a Plains Cree conceptual framework on theory and methodology. It is the buffalo hunt. The buffalo – *paskâwo-mostosw* – were the mainstay of the Plains Cree economy. 'In 1870, there were hundreds of thousands of buffalo in the Saskatchewan country; by 1881, there were only a few head, widely scattered' (Mandelbaum, 1979: 51). The slaughter of the buffalo due to the encroachment of European settlement led to the starvation and destruction of the traditional Cree economy. In its prime, when the buffalo were plentiful, the hunt was a central part of Plains Cree life. There were two ways of procuring buffalo, the hunt and the chase. In the autumn and early winter, tribes used a buffalo chute or pound, but in the spring and summer, as the herds moved southward, they used the chase. In reading stories about the hunt, it is apparent how place, values, and ceremony are integral to this act. *Peyasiw-awasis* (Chief Thunderchild) shares a story of the hunt:

> In the days when the buffalo were many, there were Old Men who had the gift of 'making pounds.' Poundmaker's father was such a one, and he gave the name to his son. Another was *Eyi-pâ-chi-nas*, and when it was known that he was 'sitting at pound' – that he was seeking the supernatural power to bring the buffalo – hunters would gather.
>
> One winter there were ten teepees, just for these hunters. Working all together, they cut trees to make a circular pound about seventy yards across ... The gate was fourteen feet wide, and out from it they laid two long lines of tufted willows that spread farther and farther apart, to channel the buffalo into the pound. In the centre they set a great lobbed tree.
>
> When everything was ready, other Old Men joined *Eyi-pâ-chi-nas* and sang the buffalo song. Far on the plain, a herd of buffalo was sighted, and two young men rode out to watch. They were to blow their whistles as soon as the buffalo started to move in the early morning ... The buffalo came on between the lines of the wall and through the gate ... Then the hunters closed in, and stopped the gateway with poles and buffalo robes.

> We would cut up the meat till late at night, and haul it with dogs to the encampment ... Other bands came to join us and to feast. (Quoted in E. Ahenakew, 1995: 36)

Underlying the hunt was a way, a methodology, that Plains Cree people used to undertake a sacred act that kept the tribe and its people alive. The hunt involved preparation for the hunt, a method, protocol, ceremony, and respectfulness for going about the procurement of these animals and sharing the bounty. In many ways, the story of the buffalo hunt is a research teaching story, an allegory for a Plains Cree conceptual framework for research – preparation for the research, preparation of the researcher, recognition of protocol (cultural and ethical), respectfulness, and sharing the knowledge (reciprocity). The buffalo hunt provides an epistemological teaching, a reference point for how to do things in a good way, born of place and context specific to Plains tribes. Driving through the Qu'Appelle Valley today, it is easy to imagine the hunt in this place, and I can ground my research framework in the place markers of my ancestors.

Like place, language locates Cree culture. There are six different dialects of the Cree language: (a) East Cree (Montagnais and Naskapi); (b) Attikamek Cree (R dialect), which is also spoken in Quebec; (c) Moose Cree (or L dialect), found in Ontario; (d) Swampy Cree (N dialect), found in Ontario and Manitoba; (e) Woods Cree (or TH dialect), spoken in Manitoba and in north central Saskatchewan; and (f) the Plains Cree (Y dialect) found in south and central Saskatchewan and throughout central Alberta. There are additional Cree languages and communities found in British Columbia, Northwest Territories, and Montana (Wolvengrey, 2001a). I am of the Plains Cree Y dialect or *nêhiýawêwin*.

In taking a Plains Cree language course, I was intrigued to learn how the language constructs fit with my understandings of a Plains Cree worldview. It reinforced for me why language is so important when considering a Nêhiýaw epistemology. The linguistic paradigms that we studied included the imperative, delayed imperative, the indicative, and the subjunctive. The subjunctive paradigm is the conjugation of the AIV in the 'ing' mode. If I were writing, 'I am sleeping' in Cree, it would look like this: *ê-nipayân*. 'I am getting up' would be *ê-waniskâyân* (adding the *ê-* to the beginning of the word and yân to the end makes singular the first-person subjunctive) (F. Ahenakew, 1987).

I am told that fluent Cree speakers most often speak in the subjunctive, or 'ing,' mode. The subjunctive is the opposite of declarative and suggests a worldview that honours the present, what we know now. It also suggests a worldview that focuses as much, if not more, attention on process than on product or outcome. Cree Elder Joseph E. Couture explains this concept: 'Everybody has a song to sing which is no song at all; it is a process of singing, and when you sing you are where you are' (quoted in Friesen, 1998: 28).

When Cree and Saulteaux Elders talk about the world as being alive, as of spirit, it makes sense because this is reinforced on a daily basis in the language. Animals, tobacco, trees, rocks are animate, and hence they merit respect. Learning about the structure of Cree language gives me a sense of the way that fluent Cree speakers would have related with their world. Although one may not become a fluent Cree speaker, having an understanding of how language influences Cree knowledge is a key aspect of a research framework based on Plains Cree epistemology.

Ancient knowledge is still alive in Cree communities. The most sacred form comes through dreams, fasts, sweats, vision quests, and during sacred ceremonies. Historically, there were different sacred gatherings among Plains Cree people, many of which still occur today. One of the most sacred is the Rain Dance, which is held at a specific time each year, and individuals who participate (stall dancers) do so for solemn and personal reasons. 'Traditionally, Cree and Saulteaux votaries often made vows in time of great stress such as when a family member was very ill or when an individual confronted immediate danger' (R. Brown, 1996: 44). The lodge is constructed in a specific manner, and there is specific protocol around the dance, dress, and ritual practice of the rain dance. The Saulteaux and Cree of the Qu'Appelle Valley share similar rituals in carrying out the Rain Dance. R. Brown documents Tommy Anequad's explanation of the Rain Dance, which points to the complexity of ritual and method within this ceremony: 'The drums, the whistles, the chanting, the sweet-grass incense, fasting, the Thunderbird's nest, the ritual and ceremony are used to create the proper atmosphere ... to help the person under vow who participates ... to attain cosmic consciousness' (1996: 150).

From teachings conveyed through oral tradition, these practices are said to be timeless, and while there have been some changes the internal integrity of the Rain Dance has remained. Through ritual

and ceremony, individuals give of themselves for another, and in this sacrifice the dancers are able to make a connection with the spirit powers to receive spirit blessings for loved ones on whose behalf they dance. During the ceremony, a dancer may receive a vision or dream that offers guidance or assistance. As Brown (1996) recounts, if someone is unsure about a vision, he or she can offer tobacco to the Rain Dance sponsor or a known sweat-lodge leader who assists in interpreting the meaning of the vision. Not only are ceremonies sources of knowing, they also sanction acts of great importance to the people.

The pipe, the drum, the songs, and prayer are integral parts of Plains Cree ceremony, and ways in which to honour the Creator and seek blessing. Once an act is carried out with the sanction of the pipe, it is considered sacred. In Saskatchewan, according to Elders, the treaties are a sacred accord that was sanctioned by the Cree people through one of the most sacred of ceremonies, the pipe ceremony. According to Plains Cree Elder George Rider of Carry the Kettle First Nation, Treaty Four tells us that 'the pipe is holy and it's a way of life for Indian people ... The treaty was made with a pipe and that is sacred, that is never to be broken ... never to be put away' (quoted in Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000: 28). Sacred knowledge is not *really* accepted in Western research, other than in a peripheral, anthropological, exotic kind of way. This can create a difficulty for the Indigenous researcher, for if one chooses to embrace Plains Cree knowledges one must honour all that they are.

Plains Cree ways of knowing cannot be an objectified philosophy for this knowing is a process of being. This epistemology emphasizes the importance of respect, reciprocity, relation, protocol, holistic knowing, relevancy, story, interpretative meaning, and the experiential nested in place and kinship systems – all of which ought to be in a research process that encompasses this way of knowing. My ancestors were highly strategic peoples in both the practical aspects of life as well as within ceremonies and rituals contextualized in place and manifested in ways of knowing. Plains Cree knowledges are bound with and exist within a relational universe, and research choices flowing from this positioning must be congruent with these foundational, holistic beliefs.

The proposition of integrating spiritual knowings and processes, like ceremonies, dreams, or synchronicities, which act as portals for gaining knowledge, makes mainstream academia uncomfortable,

especially when brought into the discussion of research. This is because of the outward knowing versus inward knowing dichotomy. It also has much to do with Western science's uneasy relationship with the metaphysical. Yet, all ways of knowing are needed, and the Cree ancestors knew this. They knew about inward knowing and valued it highly. In fact, this inward knowing was a central, integral component to how they approached the buffalo hunt and their most deeply sacred ceremonies. They were able to share teachings through stories about their experiences, passed on using the oral tradition, and it was respected as legitimate. Why would research be different?

As I write, my mind goes back to early memories. I grew up on a farm, and when I was young I played by the slough, in the trees around our house, and sometimes on the unbroken prairie between our house and my Auntie's place not too far way. I remember running around on the prickly grass, picking dandelions, and collecting odd-shaped rocks. I knew from a neighbour that arrowheads used to be commonly found on the prairie. I must have been five or six, old enough to understand that arrowheads were from Indian people, and that I, too, was of Indian ancestry. This was an early memory of my Cree identity, connecting those arrowheads with the land and circling it back to me. This is about *miskâsowin* – about about finding belonging – and it became part of my research story. The gift of holistic epistemologies, of Nêhiýaw, is that though they do not demand, but rather provide an opportunity for *miskâsowin*. In doing so, in finding belonging, research becomes more than gathering and presenting data.

A Conversation with Michael Hart

To complete this chapter, Cree scholar Michael Hart shares his reflections on Cree knowledge. Michael Hart is Nêhiýaw (Cree) from the Fisher River Cree Nation in Manitoba. He lives in Winnipeg and currently holds a faculty appointment at the University of Manitoba. He has doctoral degree in Social Work. I have been familiar with Michael's work for several years. As a post-secondary instructor and curriculum developer, I have used Michael's book, *Seeking Mino-Pimatisiwin: An Aboriginal Approach to Helping* (2002), which has been useful in illustrating an Indigenous cultural approach to contemporary social work practice.

I am scheduled to meet Michael at his home in Winnipeg in the afternoon, so I hit the Trans-Canada Highway heading east from Regina in the early hours of the morning. By the time I get to Michael's place, I am a little tired, frazzled, and nervous, but I immediately feel comfortable. He offers me coffee and food. We sit at his kitchen table and start to talk about what is becoming a very familiar topic to me – Indigenous research methodologies.

MAGGIE: What do you think are some of the challenges that we are having in trying to explain our methodologies to academia?

MICHAEL: I would step back even further. I would go back to looking at – again it's a Western concept – worldviews. The challenge with bringing out worldviews is language, overall. There are concepts that we have in Cree that don't have English translations. Right off the bat we are going to lose some of the meanings, and we are also going to change some of the meanings. At the same time, we need to do that because we don't have the choice at this point. I have been trying to learn Cree for a long time, but I have a long, long way to go.

I was just remembering something ... about protocol. The way I've been dealing with things – let's say I will come to a ceremony, come to understand protocols, but it's not the ceremony that gets transferred, it's the underlying meanings. What I am doing now is looking at the different things that I have been through with Elders, with traditional teachers, and try to understand the underlying teaching, what values are being demonstrated. What am I supposed to do and how am I supposed to act? I will try to transfer those pieces into the new context, which to me reflects what we have to do in life. What we have to do right now in terms of decolonizing – I wish there was [another] term because decolonization focuses on colonization. My intent is to focus on our own ways. What ends up coming to me again is that it goes back to language and place.

I am Indigenous, I speak English, and that's where I come from. I am trying to understand that perspective because it reflects my reality. My mother was fluent in Cree. I have listened to her growing up, speaking Cree, but when she spoke to us she spoke English. My Mom said that we didn't want to learn, so there is always that piece. It doesn't mean that I am not Cree, but I have a different understanding than a Cree speaker. The journey for the

fluent Cree speaker or the Saulteaux speaker isn't the same journey that you or I would take. The journey you and I would take wouldn't necessarily be the same, but they are all part of being Cree. If we deny that, then we have to deny ourselves, and my understanding about our peoples is that we don't do that. We are inclusive, we bring people in. They may come from a different place, have a different journey, but they are still part of us and they are still brought in. It's only when it's to the detriment of the group.

For me and how I value language, it can be hurtful not to speak the language in terms of the peoples. If it gets to the point if there is not enough [Cree] speaking, then we [have] lost that aspect for the future, not just within us, but as peoples. I know it needs to be retained.

MAGGIE: How do Indigenous researchers approach the cultural aspects of Indigenous knowledges when making methodological choices? [*We talk about dream knowledge.*]

MICHAEL: In spending time with these Elders, they [may help you] come to understand a dream, but it's knowledge when you put those dreams, or that dream, into the physical reality. I am trying to explain this without speaking of a particular dream ... Let's say I dream about a smoke lodge, a dream about a particular aspect of a smoke lodge, the way you have to go to the smoke lodge. The dream in and of itself has informed me, but the knowledge process is just more than me having that dream. It is more than me taking that dream and talking with an Elder about it. It includes that process of doing whatever I have to do for that dream to become reality. The methodology isn't just the dream, it isn't just you sitting back and coming to understand the dream, but what you do with that dream, how you put it into reality. So for me, when I think about how I approach research, the issue of research methodology – I never thought of it as an issue but that's an interesting point in and of itself – that's how I understand methodology. When I talked about there being no single methodology, this is another example. I see people focusing just on the one, maybe on the dream. I had this dream and therefore I came to know, which I won't dispute, but I think there is more to it.

There's a longer process that needs to be involved in bringing the dream to life. It's already alive, but bringing that dream into this world. So that whole piece, how you came back, how you ended up home. To me, that is speaking about the methodology. It would be like doing interviews and saying the interviews are the methodology. There is more, there is a whole bunch of other pieces that are tied to that.

The dreaming would almost be part of the method. Methodology is bigger than that. So how do I approach it? Through a lot of reflection back on my time with Elders, with traditional teachers, in ceremony – those are my biggest influence. I do readings on other areas and talk with other people about their experiences, but I approach it more from there [Elders, ceremonies] because I want to try understand it the best I can in a way that reflects how we do things. I say ceremonies because to me I don't hunt, so I can't rely on that process. A key piece for us that reflects our culture is the ceremonies. To me, they have probably been influenced the least [by other cultures] as opposed to other things.

As an Indigenous researcher, how do you understand an Indigenous approach to research? Well, like I said, it depends upon which approach you take and which understanding you have. I think it takes a lot of self-reflection, not just self, but self in relation to the Elders, the ceremonies, your academic life. I mean, when we go out fasting we are opening ourselves and inviting the spirits to be with us. We are reflecting on ourselves as well, so, to me, both of those aspects would be present in Cree ways of approaching research.

Postscript: A Written Correspondence from Michael Hart after the Interview

What follows is an e-mail that Michael sent me after the interview, and I feel that its inclusion, with his permission, is an important continuation of our conversation:

> I know there is much more to conducting Indigenous research, or more specifically Cree research since I am writing as a Cree man who has and is learning from Cree Elders across Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. We have several tools to help us enter a place, a sacred, beyond physical place (I am realizing place does not capture what I want to say, since place is too often limited to physicality or the more post-modern/post-structural conceptualization of location) and these tools are aspects of our

means to access knowledge. I guess even before we get to that we need to consider 'what is knowledge?' For me, knowledge is that which helps people move forward in their lives. It may help one person, or it may help many. I guess that is one of the differences I see in my understanding of Indigenous knowledge and Amer-European knowledge, particularly Amer-European knowledge based in positivistic empiricism: That knowledge can be applicable to one person. However, it [knowledge] is beyond one person in that it is between that person and the sacred world. Anyway, back to my commentary.

It seems to me that tools are significant. These tools include our pipes, our songs, our rattles, and our sacred items that we care about, including plant and animal medicines. These items are catalysts in our processes. While by themselves, they may mean very little. But, these items have arisen through at least one of several processes. These processes include dreams of the items before they arrive, the interpretation of the dreams of these items, the acceptance of these items as catalysts, and the passing of these items from one person to another. As I was reading your proposal and thinking on Indigenous ways of coming to know and what is it that we know, I was listening to some stickgame songs. While these songs are not on the level (which suggests a whole other discussion since level implies a very significant consideration) as sundance, smoke lodge, chicken dance, or sweat songs, they did remind me that part of our processes, hence methodologies, including a reliance on such catalysts (I do not know what words to use to express my meaning other than catalysts). They are physical manifestations of sacred experiences. So when I have prepared for my research for my Ph.D., my methodology includes the use of these items, particularly a pipe and songs. I have also partaken in other activities to seek guidance, specifically ceremonies. Finally, I will continue to rely on these sacred items for support as I complete my degree. Hence, our methodologies are bigger than we can easily explain. I think your task is an honourable, but large one as it is bigger than we can imagine. I should speak for myself: Bigger than I can imagine.

As a listener, I interpreted and took teachings from what Michael Hart said. He reaffirmed that there is a distinctive Indigenous methodology based upon tribal worldviews. In doing so, he stressed the significance of Indigenous methodologies. Although Indigenous people share many methods, one's own distinctive culture provides a unique underpinning to a particular methodological approach. Michael proposed that epistemology is found in language. He talked about the relationship between language, place, and people.

As he spoke, I thought about my desire to learn the Cree language and the resistance that I felt while living on Vancouver Island. It was not that I had any philosophical problems with the notion of learning Cree on Coast Salish territory. Instead, I just could not get into it – I am not sure why, but maybe this helps to explain. When I returned to Saskatchewn and began *Nêhiýawêwin* instruction, one of the first phrases my classmates and I learned was to introduce ourselves. It goes like this: Tânisi, Maggie, *nitisiyihkâson*, Kovach, *nitaspiyikasôn*, Pasqua *iskonikanik nipê-ohcin*. The *iskonikanik*, identifying the community of belonging, loosely translated means *little piece of land that the white settlers didn't want*. This one word has so much connection to Plains Indigenous people, the relationships with white settlers, treaty lands, farmland, and buffalos – it is a single word loaded with the historical context of my homeland. My conversation with Michael helped me understand why learning this word, from a Cree instructor amid other students who were Cree, Saulteaux, and non-Indigenous Saskatchewanians, fit. His thoughts on the connection between specific place, language, and relationships as the basis of tribal knowing resonated with me. Each nation has its *iskonikanik* that tell a big story in a little word, and I believe that is what Michael was saying.

In our conversation (though not in the excerpt presented here), Michael urged care in sharing knowledges coming from the sacred, especially in settings such as universities, where their legitimacy as knowledge sources may not be recognized. This is an important caution, and it left me questioning how much to share without sharing too much – this is an ethical consideration of Indigenous research with which I still grapple. Ceremonies, protocols, and ways of Cree people cannot be separated from their underlying values. Rather, they are there to affirm values. This is integral to a holistic tribal epistemology. Being kind, being inclusive, being community-minded in combination with ceremonies, protocols, and ways is the power of Cree culture. In relating this, Indigenous researchers have great guardianship and responsibility for the research flowing from a tribal epistemology.

Indigenous epistemologies and research frameworks are undoubt-

edly imbued with complexity. However, given the challenges, growing numbers of Indigenous researchers are finding ways to integrate valuable tribal epistemologies within their research frameworks. This is causing a stir in the larger research community. Yet, progress is dependent upon decolonizing colonial spaces.

4 Applying a Decolonizing Lens within Indigenous Research Frameworks

> All problems must be solved within the context of the culture – otherwise you are just creating another form of assimilation.
>
> – Maurice Squires (in Bruyere, 1999)

'What knowledge do you privilege?'(Boyd, 2005: 1). This question seeks to unmask the personal choice of epistemology. It is also about the politics of knowledge. A variety of critiques have dealt with this query by analysing the political nature of knowledge construction in marginalized communities (Fanon, 1963; Memmi, 1965; Henderson, 2000). From an Indigenous research perspective, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) applies a specific decolonizing analysis that reveals the degree to which Indigenous knowledges have been marginalized within Western research processes. Much has been written, and while few within the non-Indigenous community would openly contest the historical existence of colonialism, praxis has been minimal, with a small community of allies at the forefront of action. Within the academic environment, part of the difficulty lies with a theoretical positioning that, in its very name, obscures historical analysis. For example, critical theorists argue that *postpositivism*, *postmodern*, and *postcolonial* universalize marginalization and work to diffuse sites of contestation. Tuhiwai Smith critiques the 'post' in *postcolonial* and suggests that 'naming the world as "post-colonial" is, from indigenous perspectives, to name colonialism as finished business' (1999: 99). In focusing on the 'post' perspective, it frees one from historical analysis. Within a Canadian Aboriginal context, this is problematic because the non-Indige-

5 Story as Indigenous Methodology

Stories remind us of who we are and of our belonging. Stories hold within them knowledges while simultaneously signifying relationships. In oral tradition, stories can never be decontextualized from the teller. They are active agents within a relational world, pivotal in gaining insight into a phenomenon. Oral stories are born of connections within the world, and are thus recounted relationally. They tie us with our past and provide a basis for continuity with future generations.

Stories originating from oral traditions resonate and engender personal meaning. 'In Blackfoot the English word 'story' literally translates as involvement in an event. If a Blackfoot asks another Blackfoot to tell a story, he is literally asking the storyteller to tell about his '"involvement" in an event' (Little Bear, 2004: 6). Jo-ann Archibald reflects upon how stories capture our attention and tells us that stories ask us 'to think deeply and to reflect upon our actions and reactions,' a process that Archibald calls 'storywork' (2001: 1). As a form, it is no wonder that narrative is the primary means for passing knowledge within tribal traditions, for it suits the fluidity and interpretative nature of ancestral ways of knowing.

This chapter focuses on the inseparable relationship between story and knowing, and the interrelationship between narrative and research within Indigenous frameworks. In considering story as both method and meaning, it is presented as a culturally nuanced way of knowing. To honour the richness of narrative, Métis scholar Jeannine Carriere explains how story evokes the holistic quality of Indigenous methodologies.

Within Indigenous epistemologies, there are two general forms of stories. There are stories that hold mythical elements, such as creation and teaching stories, and there are personal narratives of place, happenings, and experiences as the *kókoms* and *mósoms* (Aunties and uncles) experienced them and passed them along to the next generation through oral tradition. Both forms teach of consequences, good and bad, of living life in a certain way. Edward Ahenakew writes of the Elders' responsibility in ensuring a moral code and history of the tribe, and it was through storytelling that they fulfilled this obligation (1995: 37). Stories are vessels for passing along teachings, medicines, and practices that can assist members of the collective. They promote social cohesion by entertaining and fostering good feeling. In times past, as now, stories were not always transferred in lexical form, but through visual symbols, song, and prayer. The pictograph by Chief Paskwa that was recently repatriated to the Pasqua First Nation (*Dibajiimo Masinahikan 'Newspaper,'* 2007) recounts the chief's perspective on the signing of Treaty Four. This pictorial narrative, the only known document of its kind on the treaty relationship, signed in 1874, stands as a historic interpretation of a defining relationship in Canada, from Indigenous eyes. Although the form varies, stories reveal a set of relations comprising strong social purpose.

The interrelationship between story and knowing cannot be traced back to any specific starting time within tribal societies, for they have been tightly bound since time immemorial as a legitimate form of understanding. Cree scholar Neal McLeod writes of the centrality of narrative and memory for Cree culture in his book, *Song to kill a Wîhtikow*, that '*mistahi-maskwa* was an inspirational Cree visionary because he held the imagination and collective memory of our people at a time when a great darkness, a metaphorical *wîhtikow*, fell on the land' (2005: 8). As with many oral cultures, narrative functions as an intergenerational knowledge transfer (Cruikshank, 1998). The stories hold information about familial rights associated with territorial stewardship, and though the prominence of story in maintaining generational responsibilities is ancient, it has only recently been recognized in Western jurisprudence. In the 1997 Delgamuukw decision, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that oral testimony has the same weight as written evidence in land entitlement cases. Within Western sites, the significance of story within Indigenous culture is less contested. Rather, it is the nature and structure of story that causes diffi-

culties for non-tribal systems due to its divergence from the temporal narrative structure of Western culture. For tribal stories are not meant to be oriented within the linearity of time, but rather they transcend time and fasten themselves to places (McLeod, 2007). No doubt, this narrative structure creates discomfort, born of unfamiliarity, for those new to it. It creates a significant challenge for research, where 'non-bracketed story' as method and meaning is relatively new to the qualitative landscape.

The anthropological focus on the rich oral traditions within tribal societies has tended to relegate story to a historic cultural method that lacks currency within contemporary knowledge centres. The underlying assumption is that oral tradition is of pre-literate tribal groups that no longer has the same application in a literate and technological world. Within research, a particularly lettered activity, a challenge for Indigenous researchers is to find openings to honour this integral quality of Indigenous inquiry. Within qualitative research, Indigenous researchers struggle to maintain oral tradition for a number of reasons. One reason is to be congruent with tribal epistemologies that honour our rich ancestry. Another equally forceful motivation is to ensure that holistic, contextualized meanings arise from research. The holism of tribal knowledges explored in Chapter 3 undergirds this approach. The oral rendition of personal narrative or formal teaching story is a portal for holistic epistemology. It is the most effective method for capturing this form of knowing in research.

Those well-versed in qualitative research methods will confirm that story is not unique to Indigenous knowledge systems. Story is practised within methodologies valuing contextualized knowledge, such as feminism, autoethnography, phenomenology, and narrative inquiry. Terminology like *life history* and *oral history* is familiar to these forms of qualitative inquiry. Life history is associated with a study of the totality of a person's life, while oral history concerns a particular aspect of an individual's experience that pertains to the research topic at hand (Liamputtong, 2007). It is recognized that story as both form and method crosses cultural divides. However, the way that a culture employs story differs. In reference to art (a form of story) and method, Kandinsky makes the point: 'The borrowing of method by one art form to another can only be truly successful when the application of the borrowed method is not superficial but fundamental' (1977: 20). Story, as a method, is used differently from culture to culture, and so its application falters without full appreciation of the underlying epistemological assumptions that motivate its use. Indigenous people versed in their culture know that sharing a story in research situates it within a collective memory. Likewise, Indigenous researchers ought to know of the deep responsibility of requesting an oral history – i.e., an individual recounting of a particular happening. A researcher assumes a responsibility that the story shared will be treated with the respect it deserves in acknowledgment of the relationship from which it emerges.

Concurrently, the use of story as method without an understanding of cultural epistemology, defined broadly, can create problems with understanding the totality of Indigenous narrative. Cultural specificity of Indigenous story is manifest in teaching and personal narratives and can have profound implications for the interpretation of story within research. Gerald Vizenor, a Chippewa literary critic, advises that within any Indigenous story there is a both a trickster and a tragic element at work, serving to show the irony of living in an uncertain world. He argues that tribal storytellers must pay specific attention to how the actors involve themselves in social encounters. Vizenor goes on to argue that often in the interpretations of these stories 'these encounters are clouded by racial misrepresentations that emerge from a long history of "hyperrealities" about Indians' (quoted in Buendía, 2003: 61). The notion that everyone understands story and that it is an effective means for gaining insight and making sense of the world is not contested. What is contested, however, is that story is an apolitical, acultural method that can be applied without consideration of the knowledge system that sustains it. From that perspective, engaging with tribal stories means understanding their form, purpose, and substance from a tribal perspective. To attempt to understand tribal stories from a Western perspective (or any other cultural perspective) is likely to miss the point, possibly causing harm. This has been a significant finding since the dark years of anthropological research on Indigenous culture. Against this backdrop, there are a number of practical aspects accompanying story as knowing within Indigenous research frameworks.

Story and Inquiry

After considering the importance of story, my own and others', in communicating the breadth of tribal knowledges, I grappled with the methodological complexity of attempting congruency between my

philosophical standpoint, data-gathering choices, and the meaning-making strategy within my research. While this research was located within the contextual enterprise of Western research production, the research question itself was deeply cultural. I knew from a Nêhiýaw point of view that knowledge and story are inseparable and that interpretative knowing is highly valued, that story is purposeful. I knew that listening to people's narratives would be the primary knowledge-seeking method in my research. This left me with several methodological quandaries. Rather than pedantic responses to specific questions, this chapter considers story as method in light of the relational quality of story, representation in narrative, data-gathering choices amiable to story, and the challenges of writing story from an Indigenous perspective. In consideration of the previous chapter, there must be commentary on the utility of how story works as a decolonizing action that gives voice to the misinterpreted and marginalized.

Story and Indigenous inquiry are grounded within a relationship-based approach to research. The centrality of relationship within Indigenous research frameworks, and the responsibility that that evokes, manifest themselves in broad strokes throughout research in the form of protocols and ethical considerations. (From a methodological perspective, the same undergirding value of respect applies to all choices made within the research design.) This is significant in Indigenous qualitative methodologies involving story where there is a primary relationship between researcher and research participant. For story to surface, there must be trust. Given the egregious past research practices in Indigenous communities, earning trust is critical and may take time, upsetting the efficiency variable of research timelines. Cree scholar Laara Fitznor spoke about the significance of pre-existing relationships with research participants: 'They know me, I have a good reputation and they know that I would be trustworthy.' Such relationships hold a history of shared story with one another. If a pre-existing relationship is not in place, such a process must begin. In asking others to share stories, it is necessary to share our own, starting with self-location (see Chapter 6). For many active in Indigenous research, this comes naturally, as a part of community protocol. The researcher's self-location provides an opportunity for the research participant to situate and assess the researcher's motivations for the research, thus beginning the relationship that is elemental to story-based methodology.

Within the research relationship, the research participant must feel that the researcher is willing to listen to the story. By listening intently to one another, story as method elevates the research from an extractive exercise serving the fragmentation of knowledge to a holistic endeavour that situates research firmly within the nest of relationship. This relationship, as Coast Salish researcher Robina Thomas suggests, is not bound solely to research interview sessions. In hearing the stories of residential school survivors, she acknowledges the deeply personal quality of her research methodology. Thomas' storytelling methodology evokes a deep and personal response, and demands that she, as researcher, be available to hear the stories when the tellers are prepared to share. 'On one occasion, a storyteller phoned and asked me to come over that evening and tape record; he was ready to tell more stories' (quoted in Brown and Strega, 2005: 247). This experience represents the holistic journey of both parties. It alerts prospective researchers that such an approach asks for a deep respect associated with the relational quality of this approach. As mentioned in Chapter 1, it can never be a 'smash and grab' approach to seeking knowledge (Martin and Frost, 1996).

The privileging of story in knowledge-seeking systems means honouring 'the talk.' To provide openings for narrative, Indigenous researchers use a variety of methods, such as conversations, interviews, and research/sharing circles. For her research, Laara Fitznor employed 'research circle-talking circles' to give space for story. It was a method where 'I could ask questions and people would share what they had to share.' It provided a forum for people to relate their stories in a holistic fashion that was not fragmented by a structured interview process. Jeannine Carriere comments on how she used a qualitative in-depth interview method to hear the stories of her participants. 'The best methodology that I found was in-depth interviews, because that gave me the space ... to at least guide people in terms of a question guide, but not be very strict in terms of what to say and when to say it. It was a more open approach.' The importance of less-structured research tools is documented in Anne Ryen's research. Ryen was involved in a qualitative research project with the Institute of Management in Tanzania. From her experience, the more structured the interview the less flexibility and power the research participant has in sharing his or her story (2000). Through this less-structured method, the story breathes and the narrator regulates.

Once individuals have agreed to share their story, the researcher's responsibility is to ensure voice and representation. That participants check and approve the transcripts of the stories is essential for meeting

the criteria of accurate representation as perceived by research participants. This ought to be standard practice within research generally, but because of the misrepresentation of Indigenous cultures and communities within research, it is essential within Indigenous methodologies. In presenting a story in research findings, researchers will often have to condense it. It is necessary to give participants an opportunity to review this condensed story form and approve its presentation. By fulfilling this responsibility, the researcher ascertains authentic, ethical representation. Story, then, is a means to give voice to the marginalized and assists in creating outcomes from research that are in line with the needs of the community. Reliable representation engenders relevancy and is a necessary aspect of giving back to community.

Along with a choice of method for hearing others' stories, there are implications for a co-creation process that interpretative narrative invites. In co-creating knowledge, story is not only a means for hearing another's narrative, it also invites reflexivity into research. Through reflexive story there is opportunity to express the researcher's inward knowing. Sharing one's own story is an aspect of co-constructing knowledge from an Indigenous perspective. Absolon and Willet (2004) remind us that our experiences, which live in memory, are vital to Indigenous research. They propose that our experience of being Indigenous, our identity factor, becomes integral to interpreting our research. Through a co-creative, interpretive tradition, Indigenous story offers knowledge relevant to one's life in a personal, particular way.

In presenting research, a complexity of Indigenous story-based research is transferring what is intended to be oral to written text. In *kôhkominawak otâcuniwiniwâwa — our grandmothers' lives as told in their own words*, Ahenakew and Wolfart present textually the stories of the *kókoms* speaking in Cree as closely as possible to the oral spoken story. Introducing the stories, they tell the reader, 'The style of these reminiscences is casual, familiar, and marked by numerous interruptions and exchanges' (1998: 19). It is a challenge to capture textually the non-verbal nuances of these conversations, yet this form contains much knowledge. The ability to capture the reflections of these *kókoms* as they remember their *kókoms* and *mósoms* give an insider's perspective of a Plains Cree way of being, and the role of kinship systems in passing knowledge. In Western culture, narrative has predominantly been textual, implying a set of assumptions and implications. The narrative has less immediacy in that the storyteller need not be physically

present with a story listener. In written narrative, the story becomes finalized as a written product to be read and considered according to the reader's interpretation. Once written, the relationship between the reader and the storyteller is conceptual, not tangible. In an oral culture, story lives, develops, and is imbued with the energy of the dynamic relationship between teller and listener. The story can only exist within an interdependent relationship of the narrator and audience. Writing story becomes a concession of the Indigenous researcher.

Cree scholar Winona Stevenson recounts the time that she spent reflecting upon the ins and outs of recording oral teachings that she received during her research, and the ache of putting them into written text. As many of her sources were stories shared in the Cree language, she had the challenge of first interpreting Cree into English and then writing meaning. In her research report, the style of writing shifts back and forth, from analytical commentary of discourse surrounding oral histories to a narrative style of her experience with Cree culture – one is abstract knowledge and one is story. These two ways have differing knowledge-sharing assumptions because the analysis in declarative form illustrates how knowledge conflicts with the interpretive teaching method assumed in Indigenous stories. 'All stories are didactic to varying degrees, but they hardly ever have built-in analysis – analysis is the job of the listener' (Stevenson 2000: 233).

This provides insight into the intricate sophistication of Cree oral tradition and worldview. As it pertains to research, the comparative discussion of oral history from an Indigenous, as opposed to a Western historical, point of view is intriguing. Stevenson states that Indigenous oral histories do not share conventional categorical boundaries: 'the package is holistic – they include religious teachings, metaphysical links, cultural insights, history, linguistic structures, literary and aesthetic form, and Indigenous "truths"' (2000: 79). She goes on to discuss the disciplinary objective of Western scholarship when using story as means of collecting data: 'It often is the case in mainstream scholarship, that once a story is shared and recorded, "facts" are extracted and the remaining "superfluous" data set aside.' She further states that 'the bundle is plundered, the voice silenced, bits are extracted to meet empirical academic needs, and the story dies' (ibid.). Thus, there is a need for linking Indigenous epistemologies to story as Indigenous method, otherwise contradictions would abound. This begs the question: Is story of epistemology or is story epistemology? It does not

likely matter for the question implies segregating the two. From a tribal perspective, they are inseparable.

In using story methodology, Robina Thomas shares her hesitation about writing stories down. She acknowledges 'times change,' and for Indigenous stories to be heard they need to be written down. The challenge is to serve the integrity of oral stories by adapting them to this new form (2005: 242). Can we ever bring the full nuance of the oral tradition into Western academia? Not likely. Gerald Vizenor points out that a holistic knowing is lost when stories are not delivered orally: 'So much is lost in translation – the communal context of performance, gesture, intonation – even the best translations are scriptural reductions of the rich oral nuance' (quoted in Stevenson, 2000: 19). Sitting in the now of story can never be captured through the research transcription. The knowledges that we gather in the ephemeral moment of oral story, as told by a teller, as we sit in a specific spiritual, physical, and emotional place, are of a different sort. The immediacy of the relational stands outside the research, and at best we can only reflect upon it. To make visible the holistic, relational meaning requires a reflexive narrative by the researcher.

The question undoubtedly arises – how is this different from journalism? With its emphasis on story, is it *really* research? The response, of course, depends upon the respondent and how he or she defines research. Is research a form of knowledge-seeking that is amenable only to quantifiable generalizations? If that is the belief, it shuts out the possibility of Indigenous research frameworks where generalizabilities are inconsistent with the epistemic foundation. If research is about learning, so as to enhance the well-being of the earth's inhabitants, then story is research. It provides insight from observations, experience, interactions, and intuitions that assist in developing a theory about a phenomenon.

Inevitably, the personal nature of a story will bring to light questions about the legitimacy of knowledge. Does relationship imply subjectivity? Does subjectivity contaminate evidence of 'real' knowledge? In Western research, this is about the validity of research. Knowledge then becomes that which can be proven true. From a traditional Cree perspective, truth is bound in a sacred commitment. 'So when the Old People accept tobacco from one seeking knowledge, and when they share the pipe, they are saying that they will tell the truth as they know it. They are bound in the presence of the Creator as witness to speak from the heart, to speak their truth' (Stevenson, 2000: 249). Stevenson

goes on to say that when a storyteller uses the term *tapwê* (truth), it means that the storyteller is telling the truth according to how she or he heard it. As Indigenous researchers, we are bound by this cultural imperative.

In my research, the exchange of tobacco signified that what was spoken was truth as each person knew it. There was a further recognition that the person's story would become a part of the social and historical fabric of the people, a historical truth, through their honour. It requires belief in another's integrity, that there is a mutual understanding that speaking untruths will upset the relational balance. If relational balance is not a high cultural value, such methods of 'validity' will fall flat. Relational validity is only questionable (or suspect) if one's worldview does not ascribe to it. From a methodological perspective, researchers who employ story as part of their research framework will need to be aware of the objectivity bias in research so as to support their own claims.

Story as methodology is decolonizing research. Stories of resistance inspire generations about the strength of the culture. Yet, there are political implications of Indigenous research that need to be figured into the equation. We cannot forget that the relationship between Indigenous knowledges and research is carried out within a contemporary colonial project of post-secondary studies. Thus the stories, and the content that they carry, must be shared with this appreciation to protect them from exploitation or appropriation. The use of narrative in inquiry means that the researcher must accept the guardianship of bringing oral story into academia during this particular historical moment.

A Conversation with Jeannine Carriere

It is appropriate to conclude this chapter with story. Through Jeannine Carriere's story, we can remember a past and imagine a future of knowledge shared through narrative.

Jeannine Carriere is a Métis woman whose ancestral lineage flows from the Red River Métis of Manitoba. Jeannine completed her doctoral studies through the University of Alberta, Department of Human Ecology and Family Studies, focusing on the connection between health and First Nations adoptees. Jeannine has an extensive background in supporting Indigenous children in Alberta, and I met her through her advocacy work in First Nations child welfare. I have a

connection with Jeannine because of our shared experience as Indigenous adoptees. I had a sense that even without saying too much, she would 'get me' and the motivations for my research.

This conversation took place in mid-August of 2006 when I returned back to Victoria. We met at her office. I was eager to hear about her research story as she had recently completed her dissertation. She shared with me the story of her research journey and how it was about 'getting to home' in more ways than one.

MAGGIE: Jeannine, what was your research topic and program of study?

JEANNINE: I was teaching in Hobbema, coordinating the Hobbema College program of the University of Calgary. Here I was, teaching at a First Nations university that was very impacted by the oil industry, and I was interested in how it impacted the family structures. I went to the Elders and made my offerings. I got encouragement to pursue it, but it just didn't feel that it was my research. It was with that kind of discomfort that I ended up in Saskatoon at the 'Prairie Child Welfare' symposium – the very first one. We sat in a circle on the last day, and I can't even remember how many people there were, but it was the largest circle I ever sat in. We knew at the beginning of the day that it was going to take all day. The reason for concluding with that kind of circle is that Aboriginal people who attended the first two days were getting increasingly frustrated that even though this symposium was organized to discuss Aboriginal child welfare issues, the government was doing all the talking and the universities were doing all the talking. Where were our voices and our process?

With some advocacy during the evening, we arranged to have this circle as the last discussion. In that circle, I ended up one of the last people to speak. Everybody started talking about their own experiences as opposed to the policy and what should be done in practice. It was more like, 'This is my experience with child welfare.' I felt this thing rising in me, because I thought, 'Can I really do this? Can I really talk about what [was] my experience as opposed to my work experience? Can I talk about my family experience of being adopted and reconnecting, and the whole experience around that?' As the circle kept going, it got closer to my turn, and I knew I didn't have a choice. I had to be authentic in what I said, and it had to be about my experience. I got through it without weeping too much, but after I spoke and the circle concluded I couldn't stop crying. Luckily, I had good friends there and my partner came to pick me up, and he's 'What happened to you, you were at a conference, why are you doing all this crying?'

We were driving to Edmonton and I was trying to compose myself, but what kept occurring to me is, 'Why are you searching for all these research topics? You should be doing this research on adoption. This is who you are, this is your story and this is what you should be contributing.' It was this sort of messages coming to me. I got home and called my friend from an agency I worked at right away, and said, 'This is what I think I should do. This is the third time I am changing the topic, and people are going to think I am nuts.' She said, 'You know that I have been wanting to tell you for a long time now, give your head a shake, why aren't you doing your research on adoption? It needs to be done. We need your help in this area, all the other First Nations do as well.' To make a long story short, that's how the topic came to be, and how it came to me. I knew that in my own life I attributed a lot of stuff to the adoption experience, always looking for something and damaging myself in many ways while I was looking.

MAGGIE: [*At this point we were talking about the personal preparations that became a part of our methodologies.*] There is also part of my methodology that is about me going home.

JEANNINE: Mine, in a way, has lots of parallels. There were cultural pieces for me that were happening in Alberta and I had a lot of supports there, ceremonial support and traditional approaches there. But, as with you when it came to writing, I had to go home. I went home to Manitoba. It's funny how the Creator works, because my partner had an opportunity to work in Winnipeg and I was getting a sabbatical from the U[niversity] of C[algary] to write. Away, we went, but you know what, I mean, nothing is a coincidence, right? I was supposed to go there, and not to disrespect my partner, but he became a kind of instrument for me to get there [*laughter*].

There I was in Winnipeg, transcribing tapes and writing. I was in my head, and not connecting in my heart and my soul, not stopping to think, 'Wait a minute, this is where it all happened for you, Jeannine.' Where I grew up in my adopted parents' home is twenty minutes from Winnipeg. Why wasn't I going there? There was part of me that really wanted to go, but I was scared. I was surrounded

by my birth family members, my siblings, my nieces and nephews, and that was wonderful, but that was not the whole story. I kept wondering, 'What is keeping me from that? In order for me to write about connectedness, why aren't I connecting?' I kept feeling this physical sense of discomfort, and I wasn't sure where that was coming from. A good friend of mine from Edmonton said, 'You need to go back there, you need to go to the graveyard, you need to visit your adopted parents there, you need to try and get into the house where you grew up.' I didn't think I could do that. She said, 'Pray about it, hold your tobacco and see what happens. And I think your sister needs to go with you.' She was referring to my sister, because she was the one who found me when I was twelve.

The end of my sabbatical was coming and I knew I had to get back to Alberta, and I thought if I am going to do this, I have to do this now. My partner was going away for a weekend, and I thought this is a perfect opportunity, so I invited my sister to come for the weekend and told her what I wanted to do, and asked her come with me. She said, 'Sure.' She said, 'Maybe after we are finished with [place deleted], we can go to [place deleted],' which was where she lived the longest in a foster home, not a pleasant experience for her either. We thought that we could bring some closure to these experiences together. Away we go, we decided to go to [place deleted] with a first stop at the graveyard to visit my adopted parents. I truly wanted to go and thank them for what they tried to give me, because, you know, it really was my stuff, my resistance, more than anything they did really. Sure they could have been a little less racist, a little more of this or little more of that, but all in all they were pretty good folks. They weren't the problem. It was the policies, it was the way things were done.

I am visiting the graveyard and we come to my parents' grave, and by then I am mess. I said to my sister, 'Can you say a prayer because I just can't do it.' So she started to pray and thanked them for giving me what they could. It was a beautiful prayer and I felt so much more at peace. We start walking out of the graveyard, and now I wanted to go to this house where I grew up, but I haven't spoken to anyone in my adopted family for twenty years, and I didn't have the courage to do that. I kept asking myself, 'Where am I going to get courage to do that, how am I going to do that?' My adopted sister is living in my parents' house, and ended up calling us when they passed away. I haven't seen her since my mother's funeral, so how do I go up to this house? I had all kinds of feelings of animosity toward my adopted sibling. I always felt like I was the different one, that I caused so many problems for my parents, that I wasn't as good as them. I didn't want to knock on that door and reopen that can of worms. I mean, what if she closes the door?

We are walking out the graveyard, and I see this woman walking into the graveyard, and she is going to my parents' grave. I say to my sister, 'That is … my adopted sister.' My sister said, 'What?' I said, 'Yeah, that's her.' She said, 'This is a sign. You need to go and talk to her.' I said, 'I don't think I can.' She said, 'Of course you can.' I said, 'What if I scare her?' She looked at me, then looked at her, and said, 'She looks like she can handle it' [*laughter*]. I thought, okay, so I started walking toward my sister and I called her name. When she heard, she looked up and went like this [shades her eyes with her hand] because the sun was bright, and when she did that she was the spitting image of my adopted mom. I told her who I was, and she just couldn't believe I was there. I couldn't believe she was there, and we had a bit of a superficial conversation in the graveyard. Then she said, 'Would you like to come back to the house?' That was a gift! I said I would love to and we went.

We didn't go into the house right away. I savoured the yard for a while because there was the tree that I used to climb on when I was a kid to run away. I was always running away to the creek, to the trees, whatever. I thought, 'My tree is still there.' So I had to take pictures of my tree, me and my tree, my sister, me, and my tree. It's a tree, alright! [*laughter*] Everything was just so special. At first we sat in this sun room that she built onto the garage. She started telling my sister stories about when I was a kid. It made me kind of nervous because I thought she was going to say all bad things, but, no, it was good. It was obvious that they loved me, which is something that I never thought they did. There were humorous stories.

MAGGIE: Did you write that experience?

JEANNINE: I did, right at the end. I think it's important to capture your own process, and I think Western methodology and Indigenous methodology meet in that way. It's very critical, and if you don't, you are really doing a disservice to yourself and to your audience because it's important to present what you found in the

> most accurate and impactful way you can. If you don't acknowledge your own self in the research process, then you will always have a piece missing. I had seen portfolio work with the students who I had taught and I had also been able to give guidance in using portfolios through teaching a course itself. I thought, 'What a wonderful way for me to use this as a research approach to capture my process.'

After hearing Jeannine's story, I returned to Saskatchewan. I went to see Buffy St Marie perform, and it was wonderful to see this strong Plains Cree woman in Regina not far from her traditional territories. In introducing one of her songs, she said that there is a need for all of us to find room in our plans for life. It made me think about Indigenous methodologies, about Jeannine's research story and my own. The holistic, relational, and at times raw nature of holistic research meant making room in methodology for life, for the unexpected, for the path that emerges rather than the one initially planned. Both Jeannine and I had the experience of returning to our home communities, though this was not part of the initial plan, for we had both enrolled in universities far from where we grew up. For me, I could chart out many good and rational reasons for heading home, yet the decision to go back was an emotional one. It came from my heart, involving both angst and longing, and had it been otherwise I am not sure I would have came back.

How do we explain or articulate this aspect of Indigenous inquiry that we may not even understand until long after our research has been stamped 'Finished'? If we have a chance, it is through our stories. Stories are who we are. They are both method and meaning. Stories spring forth from a holistic epistemology and are the relational glue in a socially interdependent knowledge system. In listening to the research stories of others, it is evident that research stories reveal the deep purpose of our inquiries.

6 Situating Self, Culture, and Purpose in Indigenous Inquiry

I have returned home from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations annual powwow. As the Elder gave a prayer and the carriers raised the pipe, I stood watching the grand entry, then the dancers enter the stadium in regalia, viscerally knowing their role in maintaining culture. I thought about my research journey, why I locate as a Nêhíyaw and Saulteaux researcher. Deep down, I wanted my research to help uphold the culture, for it certainly gave occasion to come home, and this in itself made it purposeful. From my current vantage point, I am thankful for this opportunity, yet there were days during the research when my gratitude was tempered. Indigenous inquiry is holistically demanding, and knowing purpose in what can be emotionally challenging work matters when spirits are low.

Experience and research told me that Indigenous inquiry involves specific multi-layered preparations particular to each researcher. Preparatory work means clarifying the inquiry purpose, which invariably gets to motivations. Preparation assumes self-awareness and an ability to situate self within the research. It requires attention to culture in an active, grounded way. There is no formula (nor could there be) for this preparation. Nor do the details of this work need to be explicitly retold, for they are not preparations amenable to academic evaluation. Yet, they are often referenced by Indigenous researchers, and consistently appear in tribal methodologies (P. Steinhauer, 2001; Bastien, 1999; Struthers, 2001). It is these preparations that count should an Elder ask: 'Why did you do *that* research, and why did you do it in *that* way?' Focusing on self-location, purpose, and cultural grounding, this chapter offers insights into the preparatory aspect of Indigenous inquiries. Integrated into this chapter, Indigenous