

**Education and Experience in the Preparation of Non-Indigenous Researchers  
Working in Indigenous contexts**

by

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B.A., University of Western Ontario, 1991

B.Ed., Nipissing University, 2002

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## **Supervisory Committee**

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## **Abstract**

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In order to learn from non-Indigenous researchers who have engaged in respectful relationships with Indigenous communities, this study sought to explore the preparation and experiences of a group of non-Indigenous researchers at the University of Victoria who have sustained research partnerships with Indigenous communities. The existing literature suggests methodologies, processes and procedures that the non-Indigenous researchers should consider when engaging in research with Indigenous communities (Battiste, 1998; Wilson, 2007; Menzies 2004; Fleras, 2004); however, it does not address issues of researcher preparedness or readiness. Through a narrative inquiry process, this study examines the ways non-Indigenous researchers' personal characteristics, values, knowledge, skills, and prior life experiences contribute to their abilities to research respectfully and sustainably with Indigenous peoples. Findings show that participants in this study embody an ally-based orientation and employ decolonizing methodologies.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For thousands of years the ancestors of the Lekwungen (Songhees) and WSANEC' (Saanich) Nations travelled these lands, conducting ceremonies, hunting, fishing, camping and harvesting a bounty of wild root vegetables, greens and berries, woods, fibres and other materials, and medicinal and ceremonial plants. (Turner, 2002, p.36)

I respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Territories on which this research will occur.

“The Elders say if it comes from the heart and is done in a good way,  
our work will count”  
(Kovach, 2006, p. xvii)

### **Problem Statement**

The negative effects of Western research on Indigenous communities have been well-documented (i.e., Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2003; Bishop, 1998; Kenny, 2004). Indigenous community members continue to tell stories of researchers watching them in their homes and communities, stealing their ceremonial pieces, and leaving their communities to use the information and artifacts for the researchers' purposes only. As a result of these kinds of experiences many Indigenous people do not trust non-Indigenous researchers. While working in an Indigenous community, researcher Charles Menzies recalls hearing this: “the community members who had participated in the study felt betrayed by the process” (Menzies, 2004, p. 22). This feeling of betrayal is an example of the damaged relationships that can result from research that does not respect Indigenous ways of

knowing and the community's established protocols and procedures. It is also an example of colonization.

Although many non-Indigenous researchers work in respectful, sustainable relationships with Indigenous peoples, those who do not run the risk of conducting research that perpetuates colonization and imperialism; oppressive forces that victimize people and uphold the divide between the privileged and the Other. The Canadian residential school policy is an example of a colonial practice whose effects continue to plague Indigenous communities in the form of poverty, ill-health, low education levels, family violence and community dysfunction. Indigenous peoples recognize the colonizing nature of their past experiences with research and they want to engage in research in a different way. So do many researchers.

The bulk of the literature I reviewed identifies that now, more than ever, there is a growing acknowledgement on behalf of the academy and research funding organizations, of ways of knowing that are different than the traditional Western systems of knowledge that have traditionally dominated the university environment (Bishop, 1998; Bishop, 2003; Castellano, 2004; Lather, 2006; Menzies, 2001, Menzies, 2004; Wilson, 2003). All of the papers I reviewed offered suggestions for the creation of protocols, procedures, and ethics standards for doing research with Indigenous communities that are created by Indigenous scholars and community members, rather than just by researchers. Perhaps this may be the beginning of a shift in the way Western researchers too can think about research ethics and how to monitor the implementation of these ethics in order to respectfully engage in community-university partnerships.

Research processes have improved and the literature includes many references in the fields of anthropology, education, health sciences, linguistics and social work that support the development of research methodologies, protocols and procedures that respect Indigenous ways of knowing and community protocols. Two pertinent examples at the University of Victoria include: Canadian Institutes of Health Research's Aboriginal Ethics Policy Development and the University of Victoria's LE, NONET Staff and Faculty Aboriginal Cultural Training program.

According to Indigenous scholar, Emma Larocque, "colonizer sons and daughters need, even more than us, to dismantle their colonial constructs" (Laroque, 2010, p. 162). Marie Battiste refers to the ways that non-Indigenous researchers can do this in support of the Indigenous community's desire for a decolonized approach to their knowledge, languages, and education:

Non-Indigenous researchers will be required to learn the Indigenous languages and world views rather than trying to be an oracle. As outsiders, Eurocentric scholars may be useful in helping Indigenous people articulate their concerns, but to speak for them is to deny them the self-determination so essential to human progress. (Battiste, 1998, p. 26)

Clearly non-Indigenous researchers have to tread lightly and carefully if they are to respectfully support the work of Indigenous peoples through research. Indigenous scholar, Shawn Wilson, goes a step further than Battiste in articulating a possible role for non-Indigenous researchers through his concept of an Indigenist research paradigm. He uses the term "Indigenist" rather than Indigenous because he believes that "an Indigenist research paradigm can be used by anyone who chooses to follow its tenets" (Wilson,

2007, p. 193), not only Indigenous researchers. He recognizes that it is the choice to follow the paradigm that makes research Indigenist, “not the ethnic or racial identity of the researcher” (Wilson, 2007, p. 194). What makes the research Indigenist is that it is done in a good way where the researcher respects her relationships with the environment, family, ancestors and ideas.

Battiste and Wilson are examples of Indigenous researchers who suggest methodologies, processes and procedures that the non-Indigenous researchers should consider when engaging in research with Indigenous communities. These directives, found in the research literature, are important considerations and they represent the bulk of the literature on the topic; however, they do not address issues of researcher preparedness or readiness. This is a gap in the current literature. Researchers need to be ready to engage in respectful research with, rather than on, Indigenous peoples. Research needs to benefit the researcher and the community and the researcher must be prepared to develop trusting relationships with community members. Yet there appear to be very few (if any) papers written on the specific experiences of non-Indigenous researchers, working in Indigenous communities in the field of education.

Several problems stem from the underrepresentation of the experiences of non-Indigenous researchers who conduct research in Indigenous communities. First, there is a lack of theory around how non-Indigenous researchers understand Indigenous epistemologies and how knowledge in this area could lead to different ways of working together. Second, as a result of the lack of theory, there is also need for research methodologies that will support theory and help non-Indigenous researchers learn how to work together with Indigenous communities. Third, it is necessary to translate

recommended theories and methodologies into practice so that we do not run the risk of repeating mistakes of the past and perpetuating the colonizing behaviours that are so devastating to Indigenous communities.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study is to understand the preparation and experiences of a select group of non-Indigenous researchers at the University of Victoria who have sustained research partnerships with Indigenous communities for at least five years. Further, I recommend ways in which non-Indigenous researchers could be prepared to conduct research in Indigenous contexts.

In order to understand the preparation and experiences that non-Indigenous allies require to be effective partners in research with and for Indigenous communities, I consider the following questions:

1. What characterizes non-Indigenous allies who have researched sustainably in partnership with Indigenous communities?
2. What values, knowledge and skills do non-Indigenous researchers find important in researching with Indigenous communities?
3. What experiences (cultural, personal, and educational) do non-Indigenous researchers consider to have shaped their abilities to research with Indigenous communities?

The aims of my study are to:

1. Document the experiences of non-Indigenous researchers who have worked sustainably in (an) Indigenous context(s)

2. Explore the personal, professional and educational experiences of these researchers to understand why they have been able to sustain research partnerships with Indigenous communities
3. Develop a framework that can help inform the ways that non-Indigenous researchers can prepare themselves to respectfully engage in research with Indigenous peoples

### **Situating the Researcher**

Sustainable research relationships with Indigenous communities are supported by many culturally appropriate practices. Having worked in several Indigenous contexts, I have learned, for example, that it is important to identify or situate oneself when entering a new community or meeting someone for the first time. This was important when I arrived in Squirrel Lake and met my host, Sammy Tait for the first time. He quietly told me who he was: a council member and son of Rose and John Tait from the eagle clan. I reciprocated with: I am Alison Brophey, born and raised on the traditional territory of the Chippewa of the Thames now living on the traditional territory of the Nipissing people. This quickly allowed Sammy to try to make a connection; he asked if I knew Joe Small, his friend from Nipissing. As it turned out, I had worked with Joe. Sammy became much more comfortable with me because we had made a connection through our introductions. Had we not been able to make this connection so early in our relationship, it's likely to have taken much longer for us to get to know and trust one another.

To further situate myself I share the following: I am a white middle class woman who has been a grateful visitor on the Coast Salish territory since 2005. My father's ancestors came from Ireland and my mother's from Scotland. Recently, I discovered that the land

on which my mother was born and raised is the site of an extensive anthropological excavation. It is considered to be among the most important pre-contact sites discovered to date in Ontario. The Davidson (my mother's maiden name) site, as it is known, is reported to include artifacts from settlements over 4000 years old- among the oldest known to exist in the southern Great Lakes area. As a child, I remember my father and uncles coming back to my grandmother's barn after walking along the river's edge; they carried with them arrowheads of various shapes and sizes. They passed their finds around and commented on which was larger and which was in better condition but I never really understood what the arrowheads were or what they represented. On every visit to my grandmother's farm, I enjoyed wandering on and exploring the land but until recently, I did not understand the possible implications of my connection to this place. I've been told that this connection may explain, in part, why I am drawn to working with Aboriginal people. I understand that relationships to the land can never be underestimated.

I have had the opportunity to work with and for Indigenous peoples through education in western and central Canada. As difficult as it was at times, I continued to seek out and take opportunities to do this kind of work and in part, it led me to seek out a course called *Aboriginalizing Research* which I took during the first year of my Masters program. As a result, I became very interested in the ways in which researchers prepare themselves to engage in research for and with Indigenous peoples. I used to think that I wanted to work directly with Indigenous people in order to "help" them. After thinking a lot about this, I realized that what helping really meant was, enabling them to navigate the colonial systems, structures and institutions and this is not what I want to do because

all it does is support a system that has largely failed Indigenous people. What I want to do is to support Indigenous people as they struggle to decolonize themselves and the world around them so that they can achieve self-determination in whatever form this takes for them. After this epiphany, I talked with an Indigenous colleague about what I might do and he suggested that the best thing I could do for Indigenous people would be to work with my own people, White people; this led to a conversation about decolonization and what this meant for me. One part of the decolonization process is recognizing my privilege as a member of the dominant culture so I began there and tried to *decolonize myself*, to see outside the ways in which I have been socialized so that I could understand other ways of being. This is a difficult and ongoing process, one that will call on me to always question what I know and how I know it.

Although I am not Indigenous, I feel a strong affinity to the Indigenous worldviews that I have learned about. I resonate most strongly with the concepts of trust, reciprocity, and relational accountability. Each of the three concepts has relationships at the core. As researchers, I believe we need to honour and respect the relationships we have with our participants. We can do this by showing trust in others and showing that we are trustworthy by keeping our word and doing what we say we will do. We can demonstrate reciprocity by always looking for opportunities to share what we have learned with the community and accepting what they share with us. This sharing might look like teaching and learning new skills or co-publishing, for example. Both trust and reciprocity count towards establishing relational accountability. Relational accountability refers to the way that you fulfill your role in a relationship with others. Have you met

your obligations in that relationship? Have you been the kind of researcher you said you'd be? Have you been the kind of researcher the community agreed to work with?

In answering the questions above, one can think as someone who is in an ally position. The concept of being an ally is best articulated in Ann Bishop's 1994 book, *Becoming an Ally* and Jen Margaret's 2010 paper, *Working as Allies*. Both authors outline the practices and processes of allies and allied work. Although Bishop's work has been "dismissed by some scholars (Reason, Roosa Millar & Scales, 2005; Broido & Reason 2005) as purely anecdotal" (Lang, 2010, p. 5), it takes a broad view of ally identity development for those working in professional and personal contexts and it's helpful in understanding the various ways in which an ally can work in solidarity with those who experience oppression. Margaret (2010) approaches the topic of working as allies from a more academic perspective as her paper is based on research she conducted through a formal research process.

In *Becoming an Ally*, Bishop (1994) reflects upon her own personal and professional experiences of aligning herself with anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-heterosexist, and anti-ableist paradigms. She outlines three developmental stages of people in the book: the 'deniers', the 'guilty' and the 'allies'. Deniers refuse to believe they play any part in societal oppression; the 'guilty' take on too much personal responsibility for societal ills, and the allies, who recognize the broader processes of oppression, are critical of power structures, and recognize that lack of action is the same as inaction.

Margaret takes a very practical approach to her research and the way in which she articulates her findings and conclusions. She focuses on the term, role, and qualities of being an ally and she addresses the challenges and opportunities associated with being an

ally. As Margaret (2010) puts it, “Being an ally is a practice and a process - not an identity. It is an on-going practice that is learned and developed through experience” (p. 12). Because the ally role is relationship-based and contextual, it is learnt through action where it requires flexibility and the ability to respond to change. Margaret provides a long list of qualities for being an ally including the following: humility, knowing yourself, being open to constant learning, long-term commitment, and self-awareness. These qualities are congruent with those expected of someone who is in a process of decolonization and working towards personal growth and supporting those with whom they engage in their development.

While Western knowledge systems have tended to be limited to what we can know in our minds, Indigenous ways of knowing include the mind, body, heart and spirit (Calliou, 1998; Castellano, 2004; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2001). Through colonization, Western knowledge systems have had the power to represent their epistemologies as universal thereby legitimizing one knowledge system while simultaneously delegitimizing others. This ethnocentric knowledge promotes policies and practices that undervalue Indigenous systems of knowledge (Smith, 1999).

## **Definitions of Terms**

Ambiguities in definitions appear in much of the literature on researching with and for Indigenous peoples. From original terms including “*savages* (from the French, *les sauvages*), or *primitives*” (Calliou, 1998, p. 33), the term First Nations “has come to be an acceptable substitute for... terms, which include *Native* (usually capitalized), *Indian* (always capitalized), *Aboriginal* (sometimes capitalized) or *indigenous* (seldom capitalized)” (Calliou, 1998, p. 33, original emphasis). Since Calliou’s 1998 paper, and

according to Indigenous scholar, Shawn Wilson, “the term Indigenous is now used to mean that knowledge system that is inclusive of all” (Wilson, 2003, p. 170) and a term that Indigenous peoples have chosen for themselves. For these same reasons, I will use the term Indigenous in this paper.

Western European settlers in Canada and elsewhere also go by many names; these settlers are referred to as Whites. In addition they are referred to as non-Indigenous, non-Native, and non-Aboriginal. Most often I will use the term non-Indigenous (to correspond to my use of the term Indigenous) but there are times when I will use the term White when it is necessary to distinguish among different non-Indigenous peoples. While the literature seems to include only the English words for the terms above, I expect that Indigenous communities have their own words to describe both themselves and those who are not Indigenous.

Terms such as decoloniz(s)e, post-colonial, and anti-colonial appear in the literature in what seems to be an attempt to recognize and oppose the colonial nature of Western research purposes, methods and methodologies. Colonialism is the establishment and expansion of a country’s territory. According to Memmi (1974), a colonizer is a person who imposes their culture, including their government, education and socioeconomic structures, on another with total disregard for the latter’s culture. Post-colonialism refers to the discourse surrounding reactions to, and analysis of colonialism. According to Gandhi, post-colonialism is the time after colonialism when the colonized finally have the opportunity to “speak for, or to sound the muted voices of the truly oppressed” (Gandhi, 1998, p. 2). Anti-colonialists critique and oppose colonial structures in order to pave the way for the emancipation of the colonized. Decolonization refers to

the undoing of colonialism and it involves reclaiming the past that was excluded in the history of the colonial and colonized nations (Smith, 1999). For the purposes of this paper, I will use forms of the term decolonize because they most closely align with a belief that we all need to change in order to develop different ways of relating and working together.

Finally, defining “the community” and who represents it appears to be a challenge faced by many researchers. In Western research, the term ‘community’ refers to the research field, but this differs significantly from an Indigenous community’s perspective where “community conveys a much more intimate, human and self-defined space whereas ‘field’ assumes a space ‘out there’ where people may or may not be present” (Smith, 1999, p. 127). Given these varied definitions, it is important for all researchers to determine who represents the community and who does not. In this paper, I used the term community in a very broad and often unbounded way because I am not working with a specific community.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This project was limited by the fact that I only interviewed researchers; I did not interview representatives from the communities in which these researchers have worked. I see this as an area for further research.

### **Significance of the Study**

Results from this research study will help to narrow the gap in the literature on the experience and preparation of non-Indigenous researchers working in Indigenous contexts. In turn, the findings will contribute to developing theory on how non-

Indigenous researchers understand Indigenous epistemologies, which will lead to new methodologies and could be used to help inform research methods courses that prepare future researchers. Enhanced knowledge in this area could lead to the development of new ways for non-Indigenous researchers to work together with Indigenous communities so that they reduce the risk of perpetuating past colonizing behaviours that are so devastating to Indigenous communities.

### **Overview of the Thesis**

In Chapter two, I discuss the theoretical frameworks guiding this study, and I introduce the current state of the field in Indigenous research methodologies. Chapter three provides a rationale for the research paradigms and methods used as well as details of narrative inquiry as a research method. Chapter four summarizes the major findings from the narrative inquiry process, drawing upon the participants' stories to more fully reveal what can be learned from their experiences. Finally, chapter five discusses how the research connects participants' values, skills and life experiences with the concepts of decolonization and ally-building. I also provide insights into my own learning especially with respect to the congruence between topic and method as an example of a decolonizing research process.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I provided a brief introduction to the challenges and opportunities of researching in Indigenous contexts. I outlined of the purpose of the study with research questions and my beliefs and interests on the topic were also included.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In Chapter One, I provided an introduction to the study, including a brief overview of the conceptual framework that guides this study. In this chapter, after explaining my search approach, I guide the reader through a brief chronology of research with Indigenous peoples in order to provide context and background. In contrast, I also present contemporary themes that emerge from the literature on how non-Indigenous researchers can better work together.

### Searching the Literature

I formally began my search on the topic of researcher preparedness while I was taking a directed studies course called *Aboriginalizing Research* and I struggled with issues related to working as an ally with Indigenous people in formal educational contexts. For several years, I worked with Indigenous students and I always felt uneasy about the work I was doing but I wasn't sure why. Was it because I thought that an Indigenous person should be doing the job? That was part of it, but there was more. There seemed to be such a disconnect between what and how I was teaching, and the students I was working with but I could not figure out what it was until one day an undergraduate student told me about her biggest challenge at university. It was not that she had to move over one thousand kilometers from her home community and live in a large urban centre where she knew no one and had little support. It was not that she was a single mother with three children who were attending a new school where they had no friends and could not speak the language.

It was not that she was struggling financially or academically. What was most challenging to her was the realization that she had to become someone else, someone “White” in order to be successful at university. She said that she had to think as an individual and focus on what was good for her alone. This was hard for her because she came from a community where members worked together and those who focused on themselves were looked down upon and seen as selfish. She wondered why she should need to become a selfish person in order to succeed at university. She spoke her language but only within the walls of the Aboriginal Student Lounge and while she tried to include, in her essays, the learning she had received from the stories of her Elders, she quickly realized that it was more important to reference textbooks and peer-reviewed sources. After listening to this student’s story, the disconnect I felt between myself and the students began to make sense. Although I did not have the language at the time, when I look back now, I believe I was beginning to understand the colonial nature of the education system and its effects on Indigenous students.

I continue to be interested in learning about researcher preparedness as it pertains to non-Indigenous researchers working in Indigenous contexts in the field of Education. I began my search of the literature narrowly including key words such as “non-Indigenous/Aboriginal/Native/First Nations”, “White”, “non-Indigenous/Aboriginal/Native/First Nations”, “non-Indigenous/ Aboriginal/Native/First Nations”, and then added “ and researcher” and “preparedness”. I found nothing so I broadened my search to include only “non-Indigenous” and “researcher”. The sources I found often included references to colonial research practices and their effects on

Indigenous peoples but focused mainly on the current and future opportunities for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers to work with Indigenous communities, be more respectful and include a world view that has been largely absent from the field of research.

My searches for “decolonizing methodologies” and “anti-colonial research” returned a broad array of items from many disciplines, including anthropology, health sciences and social work, and they were from many countries. I discovered that it was difficult to narrow my search to include education as a discipline; perhaps this is because the word education applies to every field and perhaps this is because there is little that exists? As a result, I chose to include literature from fields more closely related to education than others, such as “helping professions”. I included health sciences and social work, for example, while excluding those from geography and biology. I didn’t include “Canada” in my key words so my searches returned sources from all over the world, mostly from Australia, New Zealand and the United States. An explanation of my search would not be complete without reference to the sources outside of the mainstream scholarly literature which informed my learning and from which new concepts and understandings were generated; in particular, the personal communications from Indigenous people who have felt the effects of western research in their hearts, in their minds, and in their communities. Much of what they shared with me is echoed in the literature that I reviewed but from them, I learned in a much deeper way. Not only was it what they said to me but it was the way they said it. I listened and watched as they told me stories; this was an opportunity not available by reading text. I noticed the quiet, calm and thoughtful way they spoke, their careful choice of words- not often many words, but

well-chosen ones. I was rarely asked a direct question but the stories I was told made me think and question who I am and why I am interested in the experiences of researchers connected with Indigenous peoples.

Once I narrowed my sources to include decolonizing and anti-colonial research methodologies from select disciplines, I noticed that generally they fell into two categories focused on both theory and practice: Indigenous authors/researchers writing about Indigenous approaches to doing research for Indigenous researchers or Indigenous authors/researchers writing about Indigenous approaches to doing research for Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers. Although I found a few articles written by non-Indigenous researchers working in Indigenous contexts, the focus of these (and most of the other sources I found) was on research methodology. Further, I am specifically interested in the experiences of White researchers of European heritage who have worked in Indigenous contexts. History and issues of colonization, cultural dominance, privilege and oppression exist between White researchers and Indigenous people in ways that they would likely not with racialized researchers.

### **Researching Indigenous Populations**

In order to understand the challenges to traditional ways of “researching” Indigenous peoples, it is important to understand the chronology of events affecting Indigenous peoples and Indigenous research. Wilson (2003) goes back as far as 1770 when Captain Cook “discovered” Australia and observations of Indigenous people by Europeans became the first form of research. Observation of Indigenous peoples for the purposes of research expanded during the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the work of anthropologists such as Franz Boas whose first fieldwork experiences were among the

Eskimo in Baffin Island, Canada, from 1883 to 1884. Boas was very interested in the language of Indigenous peoples so he conducted “systematic observations on the Central Eskimo” (Lowie, 1947, p. 306) and he “pumped the natives for linguistic information, published the data secured, and in 1886 himself set forth for the coast of British Columbia” (Lowie, 1947, p. 303-4). From 1885 to 1886, Boas conducted observation fieldwork on the North Pacific Coast of North America, among the Tsimshian, Tlingit, Nootka and the Kwakiutl of northern Vancouver Island (Boas, 1904). He collected artifacts from these communities for museums in Berlin and America (Jacknis, 1996). Although his intent was to demonstrate the irrelevance of culture on brain size, the fact that he took skulls and other artifacts and profited from this is problematic. Boas is an example of the kind of researcher that went into Indigenous communities, took things that did not belong to him and used those items for his own purposes without concern for the effects on the community.

Nevertheless, the scrutiny of Indigenous peoples was not limited to the observations of anthropologists and other researchers. After Confederation in 1871, Indigenous peoples fell under the jurisdiction and control of the Canadian government. By the early 1900s, research had become “very much a colonial discourse” (Wilson, 2003, p. 164) and included the romanticizing of Indigenous peoples and the pan-identity as noble savages that resulted in the “salvage research” (Stanner, 1972; Swain, 2000 in Wilson, 2003, p. 165) that we continue to hear about today. The term salvage research is used because it “proposed recording the cultures of peoples who were thought soon to become extinct” (Martin, 2003 in Wilson, 2003, p. 165).

In 1920 the *Indian Act* was amended to require Indian children to attend school and many were forcibly removed from their families and placed in residential schools (Assembly of First Nations, 1994, p. 16). By mid-century, further amendments to the Indian Act resulted in a policy shift from segregation to integration. Residential schools were closing and First Nations children began attending secular day schools near their homes marking the “official beginning of the trend towards First Nations’ control over Indian education policy” (Assembly of First Nations, 1994, p. 18-19). Wilson argues that between 1940 and 1970, research “proffered solutions for ‘Aboriginal problems’ and was used to inform government policy, thus shaping structural relations” (Wilson, 2003, p. 165-6). During this time, non-Indigenous researchers claimed to be experts on Indigenous peoples and made “a native voice seem unnecessary, even impossible” (Beckett, 1994, in Wilson, 2003 p. 19). As a result of this silencing, Indigenous peoples’ values were “filtered through the values of others” (Dodson, 1995 in Wilson, 2003, p. 167).

Many Indigenous peoples continued to “*be researched*” (Wilson, 2003, p. 167) during the 1970’s- 1990’s. The voices of Indigenous peoples could not often be heard in the research that used a colonial worldview as the “dominant and sole research discourse” (Coomer, 1984 in Wilson, 2003) where the “only aspects of [Indigenous peoples’] cultures which [were] understood and valued by white fellas have been considered valid” (Dodson, 1995 in Wilson, 2003). Indigenous people continued to be “objects” of research, but seldom its driving force.

In the past two decades, many developments have occurred to change the structural relations between governments and Indigenous peoples. In Canada, the Royal Commission Report on Aboriginal Peoples was completed in 1996. It “challenged the

government to review the place of Indigenous people” (Wilson, 2003, p. 167) in Canadian society. Finally some government officials and some researchers believed that it was time to hear the voices of Indigenous peoples and space was made for collaborative research. No longer would Indigenous scholars “allow others to speak for them” (Wilson, 2003, p. 168); instead, they began to “break into (and possibly disrupt) a dominantly controlled Euro-western paradigm” (Wilson, 2003, p. 165).

### **Themes from Contemporary Literature**

Over the next few pages, I examine several themes connected to researching with and for Indigenous peoples that emerged from the literature I reviewed. They include: collective/relational knowledge, worldview, relationships, respect, reciprocity, trust and cultural safety. Authors often conveyed information by storytelling in some form or another and I believe this speaks to the nature of decolonizing methodologies and Indigenous, non-Western ways of knowing, learning, and meaning-making; the collective rather than individual way of knowing and being that is at the heart of Indigenous knowledge systems. “The sharing of common ideals creates a collective cognitive experience for tribal societies that is understood as tribal epistemology” (Battiste, 1998, p. 3). A researcher’s choice of methodology (i.e. decolonizing, participatory research) can give voice to those previously silenced and allow for new knowledge to be developed and respected in ways not possible through traditional “observational” research methodologies.

Having Indigenous community members involved in a research project in their community from the beginning and at all stages can make a difference to the kind of information collected and the way in which it is used, ideally to serve the community

from which it is gathered. An Indigenous community member told me a story about White researchers coming into his community when he was a youth. He remembered it as a negative experience as the researchers came into his home and took artwork that his father had created. The researcher demanded to know the story behind the artwork and was very pleased when he left with what he considered a “good” story. What he didn’t know is that the story was not true. Incensed by the researcher’s disrespectful behaviour, the artist simply told a lie so that the researcher would leave his home and his community sooner than later. Indigenous scholar and researcher, Marlene Brant Castellano, acknowledges the destructive nature of Western research but she believes that there has been a shift recently towards “transforming Aboriginal research into an instrument for creating and disseminating knowledge that once again authentically represents ourselves and our understanding of the world” (Castellano, 2004, p. 98). As one Elder put it, “If we have been researched to death, maybe it’s time we started researching ourselves back to life” (Castellano, 2004, p. 98).

A fundamental difference between the ways Indigenous and non-Indigenous people understand the world is in the ways we believe knowledge is held. Wilson describes relational knowledge as knowledge that is held collectively rather than individually. He outlines a view of reality where “relationships are more important than reality” (Wilson, 2001, p. 177). For example, from an Indigenous worldview, the relationship I share with an object is more important than the object in and of itself. It is not the realities in and of themselves that are important, it is the relationship that I share with reality. In contrast to western research paradigms where the researcher is accountable to other researchers, Wilson (2001) sees knowledge as “shared with all of

creation” (p. 176). This means being accountable to the research participants as well as their artifacts. The knowledge is grounded in a language that is verb-based where “you name [an object] through your relationship to it” (p. 177). When you believe that you have a relationship to all that is around you, you become accountable to both animate and inanimate objects and this is described as relational accountability: “You are not answering questions of validity or reliability” (p. 177) or making judgments of better or worse. Instead you should be asking “... how am I fulfilling my role in this relationship? What are my obligations in this relationship” (p. 177)? As a researcher, you will not only focus on asking questions to ensure that your research yields results that are reliable and valid. Instead you will pay attention to fulfilling your role in the research relationship- holding up your end of the agreement with the community and doing so in a way the community deems respectful. When researchers establish and honour proper relationships with everything around them they will “fulfill their role in the research relationship through their methodology” (p. 177) and objectification of knowledge and peoples will come to an end.

How we understand the world can be described as our worldview or the paradigm in which we live our lives. Wilson includes four components in his description of a research paradigm: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology. First Wilson (2001) describes ontology as “Your way of being, what you believe is real in the world” (p. 175) by which you judge which research is worth doing. Some researchers believe that there is one fixed reality, some believe that there is one reality but it is fluid and others believe that there are multiple realities (Wilson, 2001). Second is epistemology: how you think about what you believe is real. Third is methodology: “how you are going

to use your ways of thinking (your epistemology) to gain more knowledge about your reality” (p. 175). Finally, Wilson refers to axiology as a “set of morals or a set of ethics” (p. 175). According to Castellano (2004), ethics are “the rules of right behaviour [that] are intimately related to who you are, the deep values you subscribe to, and your understanding of your place in the spiritual order of reality” (p. 103). Both Castellano (2004) and Wilson (2001) advocate for ethics in research with Indigenous peoples that are based on relational knowledge and accountability, and right relationships.

Castellano (2004) states that “all aspects of the world we know have life and spirit and that humans have an obligation to learn the rules of relating to the world with respect” (p. 104). Indigenous communities have long used protocols, ceremonies and rituals that guide how individuals are to interact with both animate and inanimate objects. These are “owned” by specific clans and house groups and are seldom shared with outsiders. Unintentionally, an outsider may disrespect a community member without realizing it if they do not learn and abide by the local ways of being. Castellano suggests that Indigenous peoples engage in reciprocal relationships with all members of the community. An example of this ‘right relationship’ is “when you seek knowledge from an Elder, you offer tobacco or other appropriate gifts to symbolize that you are accepting the ethical obligations that go with received knowledge” (p. 104). Maori researcher, Russell Bishop (2003), echoes Castellano’s reference to reciprocity and he takes it a step further to include reciprocal learning using the Maori word *ako* “literally meaning to teach and to learn” (p. 226). In *ako*, the teacher is not the expert, instead both the teacher and learner learn from each other through dialogue where shared stories allow both the teacher and the learner to use their sense-making processes to gain new knowledge, either

as individual learners or in a group context. While Bishop focuses on the teacher-learner relationship, I would suggest that perhaps it's possible to extend this to the researcher(s)-participant(s) relationship(s).

In order for relationships to develop, there must be trust. As he began a research project with the Gitxaala community, Menzies (2004) remembers a story told to his team by local Elders in which, "outsiders have come, they have preyed upon the good hearts of their Aboriginal hosts, and then they have left often leaving nothing behind but new headaches and difficulties" (p. 22). Menzies believes that he was told this story as a gentle warning that he should be very careful in his work as a researcher with the Gitxaala people so he worked hard to do this. He listened to and consulted with many community members and groups over a long period of time in order to develop his methodology including his research questions, sources, data collection methods and data storage systems that the community was comfortable with and that resulted in their trust in him as a researcher. Finally, he was able to begin his research; "this came after having established a relationship of trust. Had we pushed for unfettered access or resisted any form of control or oversight it is unlikely that we would have received any support or approval for the research project" (Menzies, 2004, p. 23).

Gaining the trust of Indigenous communities and community members is no small task for a researcher but it is crucial and "the researcher must have a deep sense of responsibility to uphold that trust in every way" (Weber-Pillwax, 2001, p.170). Another way to look at trust comes out of Bronwyn Fredericks work on the concept of Pathway as a research framework for working with Indigenous women in the field of health sciences where she learned that the participants she was working with "did not want [her] to be

what they called an ‘absent person’ or ‘non-person’. That is someone who writes about them (the participants) but does not write about themselves (the researcher)” (Fredericks, 2007, p. 8). Castellano (2004) goes further to say that “research that seeks objectivity by maintaining distance between the investigator and informants violates Aboriginal ethics or reciprocal relationship and collective validation” (p. 105).

Researchers wishing to work with or for an Indigenous community must really know who they are and why they want to engage in this kind of research so that they can establish the level of trust that is required in order to work with or for an Indigenous community. As Kvale (1996, in Lather, 2006) notes, “What and why have to be answered before how questions of design can be meaningful” (p. 47). Non-Indigenous researchers may be asked why they want to work with Indigenous peoples and why they think they should. Researcher Kevin O’Connor’s (2008) reply to this question lies in how he describes himself as having “a specific past and identity that aligns [him] with much more than ‘whiteness.’ [He] believe[s] it is the people, communities and environments that surround us that create a sense of place on which we define our identity” (p. 6). However we choose to identify ourselves, it seems clear that we need to be confident about this, be willing to share it and explain why we wish to engage in research with or for Indigenous peoples before we are in a position to respectfully and ethically do so.

After “detonating almost every methodological landmine strewn across (her) research path” (Fleras, 2004, p. 117), non-Indigenous researcher, Augie Fleras, realized that her research had too often ignored Maori voices while privileging Western knowledge systems. This was no longer tolerable to her so she developed a model for

structuring respectful and ethical research engagement with Indigenous communities. She recommends a cultural safety model for non-Maori researchers / service providers in which they make a commitment to do two things. First, they have to learn to be culturally self-aware so that they become more sensitive to the potential negative effects of their “unwitting imposition of their cultural beliefs, values and norms” (p. 126) on the participants / service recipients. Second, they have to learn about the cultural, historical and structural circumstances of the recipients. This cultural safety model allows for the bridging between methodologies and leads to the concept of squared articulation where “each investigator must reflexively step back and look at their own culture...see how their culture is seen by other cultures...see how others cultures see themselves; and examine how they see other cultures” (p. 126). Engaging in this kind of reflexive practice allows researchers to “suspend values and assumptions in interpreting other people’s culture or behavior” (p. 127) and leads to a more equitable and respectful way of researching together.

As a non-Indigenous person who has worked in Indigenous contexts, I have experienced the joys and struggles of working with and for Indigenous communities. I see the need and the desire for non-Indigenous people to think and work differently with Indigenous peoples in all aspects of society including research. The destructive nature of early research as an act of colonization remains in the memories of many Indigenous community members. “When mentioned in many Indigenous contexts, [the word research] stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that’s knowing and distrustful” (Smith, 1999, p. 1). In addition to mistrust resulting from disrespectful research practices many Indigenous people have felt the effects of other colonial

practices that have devastated their cultures resulting in mental, spiritual and physical illness in communities and families, along with violence, poverty, and low education outcomes. It is no longer acceptable for research to perpetuate colonization; Indigenous peoples are demanding new ways of working with research and researchers.

Now, more than ever, research funding organizations and the academy are recognizing ways of knowing that are different from the Western systems of knowledge that have dominated research in universities. Aboriginal research protocols, procedures, and ethics standards have been, and continue to be, developed. Typically they provide a “how to” list for doing research in Indigenous contexts and they have improved our ability to engage in respectful research with Indigenous peoples. This is a long overdue shift in thinking about how non-Indigenous researchers can engage in research with Indigenous peoples in a more respectful way but there is more that can- and needs- to be done.

Several non-Indigenous researchers work in sustainable partnerships with Indigenous communities and there is a great deal to be learned from their experiences. The experiences these researchers share have the potential to move us beyond the “recipe-style” protocols and procedures that we already have towards a deeper understanding of how non-Indigenous researchers can prepare themselves to engage in respectful, sustainable research partnerships with Indigenous peoples.

In addition, perhaps new ways of thinking about and developing knowledge transfer and knowledge mobilization opportunities that will benefit the Indigenous communities and partnering institutions will emerge; research done in this way benefits Indigenous communities and builds capacity so that they may be able to carry out their

own research. To this end, researchers and communities work together in consultative and collaborative ways towards mutually beneficial results. By learning from the concept of an Indigenous research paradigm (Wilson, 2003) and those who have identified other ways of researching together differently (Fleras, 2004; Menzies 2001; McDonald, 2004), perhaps non-Indigenous researchers may be able to see ways that they may decolonize themselves so that they can learn how to become allies for and walk in partnership with Indigenous peoples.

### **Summary**

In Chapter Two I presented a brief chronology of researching Indigenous peoples. I also surveyed the key themes emerging from the literature on contemporary “best practices” from researching with and for Indigenous communities. A central focus on researching together differently is common among those who think and write about Indigenous research. Their work indicates a need for all researchers who work in Indigenous contexts to consciously consider Indigenous ontology and epistemology as they prepare themselves to engage in research with Indigenous peoples. Chapter Three will explore the methodology for this study.



## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section, methodological paradigms, I explore the philosophical underpinnings of the methodologies used in this study. I begin with a brief explanation of the interpretative paradigm, and then situate the study within a constructivist paradigm. In the second section, I explain the research method I used in this study: narrative inquiry. I begin by describing the recruitment process, I introduce the participants, and I provide details on other aspects of the research process.

### **Methodological paradigms**

This study is grounded in a social constructivist worldview. Creswell (2009) writes about worldview as being a combination of ontology and epistemology; ontology as assumptions we make about the nature of reality- what we know, and epistemology as the relationship between knowledge and reality- how we know what we know. Social constructivists assume that

individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. [They] develop subjective meanings of their experiences... meanings that are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories and ideas.” (Creswell, 2009, p. 8)

“If you look at an Indigenous ontology” says Wilson (2001, p. 176), you will see that “it is similar to constructivism where there is more than one reality” (p. 176). Therefore the researcher’s goal is to make sense of the meaning participants have made of their

experience. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) go a step further and suggest that there is a collaboration between researcher and participant “involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research progresses” (p. 4). Through engaging with participants, Clandinin and Huber (in press) see researchers and participants “as each retelling their own stories, and as a coming to changed identities and practices” (Clandinin and Huber, in press, p. 17) through the research process.

Through my constructivist lens, I see that the concept and practice of research is shaped by the particular worldview that the researcher holds. This view is strongly influenced by what the academy values as knowledge and what is accepted as valuable research, research methods and methodologies. My ontological lens guides my understanding of knowledge as co-constructed and based on experiences and context. I believe that there are multiple truths in life experience and each person comes to their understanding of truth based on an interpretation of their lived experience. Because the study in which I am engaging is phenomenological in nature, I build the essence of experience from the participants rather than explicitly identifying with one theoretical orientation.

As I designed this research study, I continually revisited my worldview as I made decisions about methodology and methods. Traditional approaches such as observation and measurement, questionnaires and surveys based on the ‘researcher as expert’ are not compatible with my worldview. They privilege objectivity and neutrality as they advocate for distance between researcher and researched that do not allow for the subjectivity and engagement I wish to be central to my approach. I prefer that the researcher and researched develop a reciprocal relationship in which participants’ stories

are allowed to speak for themselves in part through the inclusion of participant check-ins where they have the opportunity to edit their stories.

I considered qualitative methods such as collaborative/co-operative inquiry which are very collaborative in nature. Collaborative/co-operative inquiry is a way of working with other people who share the researcher's concerns and interests in order to: understand the world, make sense of life and develop new and creative ways of looking at things, and to learn how to create change and find out how to do things better. Although collaborative/co-operative inquiry is more congruent with Indigenous epistemologies, it is not practical in this research study.

Many writers (Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2003; Cruickshank, 1990; Kenny, 2004; Thomas, 2005) highlight the importance of storytelling in Indigenous ways of knowing. The narrative essence of storytelling led me to investigate narrative inquiry as a research method and I found it to be congruent with both my worldview and Indigenous epistemologies as I understand them.

I would like to make my commitments to Indigenous (decolonizing) methodologies explicit. Much thought was given to the way that the study could be designed so that it focuses on anti-colonial research paradigms that respect Indigenous methodologies. Narrative Inquiry is about researching *with* rather than *on* participants and the holistic, "circular" nature that Barton (2003) refers to implies that the researcher and the participant create new knowledge through the relationship they develop together: "reflection and action are between people telling their stories, co-participation and co-construction in the retelling requires researchers and participants to think together" (p. 520).

I approached this research not as an expert, but as a learner seeking to understand the experiences of non-Indigenous allies who have researched sustainably in partnership with Indigenous communities. As I designed and engaged in this research study, I was mindful of respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. I explored what could/would be the tangible and/or intangible benefits to those with whom I have a relationship during this research project.

As discussed in the review of the literature, working respectfully with others implies the development and maintenance of relationships. I feel strongly about my responsibility to engage in relationships in a good way. One way I prepared myself for this work was to consider the concept of self-as-relationship in Indigenous research that Stan Wilson (2001) about:

the identity of Indigenous peoples, whose concept of self is rooted in the context of community and place, differs strikingly from the identity of many Euro-Canadians whose concept of self is frequently encapsulated in independence of the individual. The self-as-relationship of Indigenous people, who understand themselves as constituted by their relationship with all living things, extends beyond the self-in-relation described by some feminist development theorists (Surrey, 1985), who understand self as constituted by the relationships between people. This self-recognition enables us to understand where and how we belong to this world...” (pp. 91-92)

Throughout my research study I intended to engage respectfully in relationships by placing high value on their reciprocal nature. Exercising humility, and listening carefully, thoughtfully, and non-judgmentally to the stories that participants share with me. Further,

I gave back by sharing my own stories and including them in the findings of this study. In part this was an attempt to respect the Aboriginal ethics, reciprocal relationship and collective validation that Castellano (2004) speaks of. Also, by including my stories, I am being a researcher who writes about her participants and herself thereby avoiding what Fredericks (2007) refers to as an ‘absent’ or ‘non-person’ in the research process.

I also attempted to respect participants and honour their stories by giving them the opportunity to edit my written interpretations of their stories. In this way, concerns about the reliability of participants’ memories can be mitigated to some degree and, according to Hoffman & Hoffman (1994), “...the subjectivity of even written documents shows that no historical source is necessarily closer to what really happened than any other” (p. 134). Furthermore, as Wilson (2001) reminds us, relational accountability is not about answering questions of validity or reliability, it is about fulfilling your role in the research relationship. I respected my relationships with participants and showed my gratitude for the stories they shared with me by gifting them with a small token of appreciation.

Although the creation of new knowledge is a goal of any research endeavour, I aimed to give considerable attention to the processes involved in this research study. The reciprocal process of learning together, along with other Indigenous values such as responsibility and respect guided my work and allowed me to engage with participants in a good way.

This research study is grounded in the qualitative, interpretive research tradition, which is well- suited to understanding lived experience: “the key idea behind qualitative research is to learn about the problem or issue from participants” (Creswell, 2009, p. 176). In qualitative research, the researcher is not concerned with testing objective

theories, generalizing to a larger population and replicating findings. Instead, the researcher focuses on attempting to capture the complexity of a situation, as it relates to people in their everyday lives. As Creswell explains, “qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study” (p.175). Rather than starting with a hypothesis to be confirmed or disconfirmed, an interpretive inquirer’s intent is to make sense of the meaning that others have of the world beginning with the data gathered from participants. Although I did not begin my study with a hypothesis, I did start the research process by completing a review of the literature in order to generate the themes upon which I reflected to create my guiding interview questions (Appendix B) and to analyze the data.

According to Creswell (2009), researchers involved in interpretive inquiry make an interpretation of the things that they see, hear and understand. After the researcher makes an initial interpretation of the data, participants and other readers are invited to offer their interpretation of the researcher’s report and therefore another interpretation of the data is offered. “With the readers, the participants, and the researchers all making interpretations, it is apparent how multiple views of the problem can emerge” (p. 176).

### **Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative Inquiry is a form of interpretive inquiry that emerged from within the broader field of qualitative research. It is an approach to understanding the way people make meaning of their lives as narratives. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) define narrative inquiry as a method that uses the following field texts as data sources: stories, autobiography, journals, field notes, letters, conversations, interviews, family stories,

photos (and other artifacts), and life experience. Of interest to narrative inquirers is not what happened so much as what meaning did people make of what happened.

A narrative research approach includes a study that is based on subjects who provide some form of narrative as the primary data source. In other words, narrative approaches are those that value people's lived experience, and study the ways humans experience the world (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). A narrative is a story that tells a sequence of events that is significant for the narrator or her audience. There is clearly a link between the narrator and her audience and Moen (2006) reminds us that there is also an interconnection between the individual and her context:

As individuals are telling their stories, they are not isolated and independent of their context. On the contrary, it is important to remember that the individual in question is irreducibly connected to her or his social, cultural and institutional setting. Narratives therefore capture both the individual and the context. (p. 4)

A narrative research approach includes three foundational premises: first, human beings organize their experiences of the world into narratives; second, the stories that are told depend on the individual's past and present experiences, her values, the audience, and when and where they are being told; and the third claim concerns the multiple voices of the participant and the researcher that occur in the narratives (Squire, 2008). Together, these claims help us understand that an individual's experience of the world is a continuously developing narrative that is constantly forming and changing. Experience cannot be defined as a single reality or truth, instead there are a number of realities that are constructed in the process of interactions and dialogues (Moen, 2006).

Narrative research approaches offer broad access to different disciplinary traditions, and they “have a high level of salience for fields outside as well as inside academia” (Squire, 2008, p.7). Because narrative inquiry is an accessible research method, it can be used by a variety of people in many different contexts. The flexibility of narrative approaches is evident in Clandinin and Connelly’s review of the work of several researchers in a variety of fields: “Geertz and Bateson in anthropology, Polkinghorne in psychology, Coles in psychotherapy, and Czarniawska in organizational theory” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 1-2). In addition, narrative approaches are used in community settings; for example, in South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s work and in the research done in Africa around describing living with HIV (Squire, 2008).

Although there is no general consensus on what narrative inquiry is and how it should be done, within the field of education, F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin have written extensively about researching using narrative inquiry. They focus on narrative as both phenomenon and method: “Narrative names the structured quality of the experience to be studied, and it names the pattern of inquiry for its study” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 45).

The work of narrative researchers suggests a synthesis between ‘modern’ interests in using research to improve individual’s lives with 'postmodern' concerns about representation and agency (Squire, 2008). As a result, researchers who use narrative approaches see the potential for change: “Linking back to personal, practical and social justification, change is seen as possibly occurring in multiple dimensions. Through engaging with participants, narrative inquirers see themselves and their participants... as

coming to changed identities and practices through [the] inquiry process” (Connelly and Huber, in press, p. 17). Opportunities for many kinds of change exist through narrative research approaches including social change; changed perceptions around what research means, who it benefits and how to engage respectfully in it could be considered.

### **Study Participants**

The purpose of this study is to understand the preparation and experiences of a group of University of Victoria non-Indigenous researchers who have researched sustainably in partnership with Indigenous communities so participants were recruited based on the following criteria: they were non-Indigenous faculty members from the University of Victoria who have engaged in research with and/or for Indigenous communities for at least five years. I considered participants from fields such as education, human and social development, humanities, and social sciences. The faculty members I chose as participants have engaged in research with and/or for Indigenous peoples and it is their experience in which I was interested. A goal of narrative inquiry is to give voice to those whose stories have been previously unheard. Although the researchers are mainstream, white, and from the dominant culture, they have not given voice to the processes through which they conduct their work as non-Indigenous researchers in Indigenous contexts. Since the focus in narrative inquiry is often on the experiences of one or a few participants rather than those of a larger group, I interviewed six participants.

I searched the UVic expertise database to determine which faculty members are included under topics related to Indigenous contexts (i.e. Aboriginal/Indigenous education, history, linguistics, social work) and then I reviewed their faculty websites to

establish whether they are non-Indigenous, to confirm that they have worked directly with Indigenous communities, and to verify the length of time they have engaged in research with Indigenous peoples. Then I created a list of potential participants.

I emailed a letter of introduction (Appendix A) to each potential participant followed up with a phone call in some cases. I also gave each potential participant the opportunity to identify other potential participants that I may have overlooked; none were suggested.

Data were collected through participant interviews. Informal data analysis occurred in part during the interviews as I listened to and engaged with each participant. Scholar Gillian Weiss (2000) describes what I did best. “I tried to stay in the background as much as possible, asking questions or making comments only when the respondent stopped speaking on a particular topic” (p. 51). I constantly analyzed the information that I was hearing and made connections by keeping a journal of field notes. Formal data analysis took place once interviews were completed and transcripts were available to me.

Narrative inquiry includes a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space as a way to think about analyzing data. This space includes: the personal and social (interaction); past, present and future (continuity); and place (situation). Although each person exists as an individual with their own lived experience, their stories can be understood within the narrative inquiry spaces in which they occurred. Paying attention to the interview transcriptions within spaces of interaction, continuity, and situation, interpretation and analysis contributed to a synthesis of my own and the participants’ stories, and their experiences of researching in Indigenous contexts evolved into a co-constructed narrative about the experience of working in partnership with Indigenous peoples.

A number of themes and sub-themes surfaced, however, I made every attempt to retain the integrity of the individual narratives so I subsumed themes as much as possible in order to give priority to keeping individual narratives intact. I began the data analysis by reflecting on the themes I identified in the literature to see if those same themes appeared in the data, how frequently they appeared, and in which ways. I also looked for common themes that appeared in at least half of the participants' stories and those that appeared in all participants' stories. Finally, I looked for themes that rarely appeared or were missing from the stories altogether.

I was also limited in the time and effort I could use for this project: ideally, narrative inquiry projects include interviews and observations over several months or years. I shortened this time-frame to approximately 6 months for the entire study, including the recruitment period. This means that I was not be able to provide the opportunity for participants and me to fully engage in all aspects of a narrative inquiry process.

The success of this project depended heavily upon the commitments made by participants and the potential for new knowledge, both personally and professionally. This challenge also proved to be its success—only individuals interested in the topic at hand chose to participate in this project.

## **Summary**

In chapter three, I explored the philosophical underpinnings of this study's methodologies. Situating the study in the interpretive and constructivist paradigms, I explained narrative inquiry, the research method used in this study and I described the recruitment process I used. Finally, I introduced the research participants and outlined my

data collection and analysis methods. In chapter 4, I outline the findings of this study by focussing on the results of the narrative inquiry.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This chapter is divided into three main sections: the first introduces the context of the study, the University of Victoria, and the participants. The second section focuses on the findings that support the literature in terms of characteristics, values, knowledge and skills and the third section highlights the findings that emerged from the participants' stories and add to the literature.

This study's research questions will be discussed in terms of the themes that emerged from the literature review. Five of the seven themes are taken up in deeper ways than are the other two; these include: worldview, relationships, respect, reciprocity, and trust. Collective knowing and cultural safety were the themes given less attention by participants. Topics which were not well-documented in the literature but were deemed to be important to participants include: flexibility, withholding judgment, space, subject area knowledge, and formative experiences. Throughout this chapter I will thread together quotes, stories and excerpts from all participants, in order to more fully bring the narrative inquiry process to life.

### **Context of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to understand the preparation and experiences of a select group of non-Indigenous researchers at the University of Victoria who have sustained research partnerships with Indigenous communities for at least five years. Below is a brief outline of the context of Indigenous education at the University of

Victoria and what follows in table 1 provides relevant information about this study's participants.

The University of Victoria is considered a national leader in Indigenous and cultural studies. Over the years, researchers in fields as diverse as linguistics, law, business, education, child development and health have forged strong relationships with Indigenous communities, seeking to understand and support both students and communities. The University of Victoria also has a growing Indigenous student population. In the last 10 years, Aboriginal enrolment has increased by more than 700 per cent, with over 600 Aboriginal students currently attending classes and a growing number of Indigenous faculty members. (*National Research Program Provides Blueprint Student Post-Secondary Success*, 2010).

The University of Victoria has demonstrated its leadership through its many programs that have as their focus Indigenous studies or specialties, Indigenous research initiatives, support for student, staff, and faculty around Indigenous teaching and learning, and awarding honorary degrees to Indigenous community members.

Indigenous programming can be found in many faculties across the University of Victoria campus. For example, housed in the faculty of Human and Social Development, the University of Victoria's Indigenous Governance programming is recognized worldwide for its relevance to Indigenous communities. Research and course content are informed by a deep respect for Indigenous knowledge and traditions as well as a thorough understanding of the current political realities of Indigenous communities. (*University of Victoria, Indigenous Governance*, n.d.).

The award-winning and accessible Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization program is offered for those involved in the development and delivery of language and cultural revitalization policies and programs. It is offered by the University of Victoria's Department of Linguistics and the Division of Continuing Studies in partnership with the En'owkin Centre in Penticton, British Columbia. (*University of Victoria, Certificate in Aboriginal Language Revitalization program*, n.d.). Yet another example is the First Nations Partnership Program developed between The School of Child and Youth Care and the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and resulted in the creation of an innovative model for ensuring the cultural representation of communities referred to as 'The Generative Curriculum Model.' Using this model, the training program has been delivered with ten First Nations organizations to date. (*First Nations Partnership Program*, n.d.). In addition to programs that are dedicated to Indigenous- related studies, the University of Victoria's Faculty of Education offers programs and services to its students through the Indigenous Education office which is committed to making the Faculty of Education more welcoming to Indigenous people, to meet the language revitalization needs of Indigenous communities and to educate both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The Faculty of Education is one of the few to require all pre-service teacher candidates to take at least one course in Indigenous education (*University of Victoria, Indigenous Education*, n.d.).

Research is a priority at the University of Victoria and there are many examples of how Indigenous interests and the University's research focus connect. One example of this connection is the *Protocols and Principles for Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context* which was created by the Faculty of Human and Social Development to provide

guidelines for researchers who need to address the interests of all concerned in the research process. (*University of Victoria, Protocols and Principles for Conducting Research in an Indigenous Context*, n.d.).

Another example is the University of Victoria's Centre for Aboriginal Health Research (CAHR). Network Environments for Aboriginal Health Research (NEARBC) is an Aboriginal health research networking program and Aboriginal health resource site of the CAHR which is widely recognized for its timely information on Aboriginal research issues, access to research databases, and regular e-news bulletins. (*University of Victoria's Centre for Aboriginal Health Research*, n.d.).

In addition to the protocols document and the CAHR, the University of Victoria led a ground-breaking, four-year (2005-2009) national research project (LE, NONET) that demonstrated that universities can take steps to help Indigenous students significantly improve their retention, and ultimately, graduation rates. (*University of Victoria, LE, NONET project*, n.d.). Finally, the University of Victoria is also proud to have as a faculty member, Dr. Lorna Williams, who has held a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Knowledge and Learning since 2006. (*University of Victoria, Canada Research Chairs*, n.d.).

In 2007, the University of Victoria created the Office of Indigenous Affairs whose mandate is aligned with the University's goal to be the institution of choice for Indigenous students. The office is unique among BC universities and reinforces the University of Victoria's strong commitment to Indigenous education. In 2009, the University opened the doors to the First Peoples House and welcomed among others, the staff of the Office of Indigenous Affairs. The House creates an academic and cultural

centre for Indigenous students as well as a welcoming space on campus for the broader community. It also provides an important central gathering space for students, staff and faculty to connect on a regular basis with Elders. (*University of Victoria, Office of Indigenous Affairs*, n.d.).

In addition, the Staff and Faculty Aboriginal Cultural Training (SFACT) Program is housed in the First Peoples House. It was designed to meet the broad project goal of making the University a more welcoming environment for Indigenous students. Through online and face-to-face workshop modules for University of Victoria, faculty and staff explored the needs of Indigenous students as they shared knowledge about cultural and historical Indigenous issues. (*University of Victoria, Staff and Faculty Aboriginal Cultural Training*, n.d.).

Over the past two years, the University of Victoria has presented honorary degrees to two Indigenous community members: Marie Cooper (SWETALIYE), DEd (June 2010) and Albert (Sonny) McHalsie (NAXAXALHTS'I), LLD (June, 2011). (*University of Victoria, Honorary degree recipients*, n.d.).

Table 1 includes information about this study's participants: their years of experience researching with Indigenous peoples and their faculty.

**Table 1- Relevant Participant Information**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Years of experience researching with Indigenous peoples</b>	<b>Faculty</b>
Dr. John Lutz	14	Humanities
Dr. Ewa Czaykowska-Higgins	30	Humanities
Dr. Alan Pence	30	Human and Social Development
Dr. Leslie Brown	30	Human and Social Development
Dr. Leslie Saxon	34	Humanities
Dr. Jessica Ball	27	Human and Social Development

*(University of Victoria, expert database, n.d.).*

## **Findings that Support the Literature**

### **Characteristics, Values, Knowledge and Skills**

The literature I reviewed revealed several characteristics, values, knowledge and skills that non-Indigenous researchers who have sustained partnerships in research with Indigenous people might have. In this section, I focus on the characteristics, values, knowledge and skills that emerged in the literature and were corroborated through the participants' stories; these include: responsibility and trust, respect, humility, worldview, reciprocity, relational accountability, collective knowledge, understanding of the negative effects of research that has been conducted in Indigenous contexts, the cultural safety model, and self-identity.

Because I believe characteristics and values are very connected yet there is a subtle difference, I think is worth distinguishing between them. For the purposes of this study, I refer to a characteristic as a feature or quality that makes somebody or something

recognizable and I consider a value to be a trait or quality that is considered worthwhile; it represents a person's highest priorities and deeply held driving forces.

### *Responsibility and Trust*

Weber-Pillwax (2001) writes about two of the fundamental characteristics: being responsible and being trustworthy. "The researcher must have a deep sense of responsibility to uphold that trust in every way" (p.170). Upholding trust in any research relationship is important and "there's a certain layer, when working with Indigenous peoples because of the relationship with colonization, and my particular responsibility as a settler so responsibility comes with that in my relationship with Indigenous peoples" (Brown, p. 12).

For some non-Indigenous people, responsibility morphs into feelings of guilt that can transform into "awareness and then through the guilt to the responsibility part" (Brown, p. 12). Once there, the researcher has a responsibility to demonstrate that they are trustworthy. Researchers do this in many ways. Initial relationships are often developed when someone who is already trusted within the community introduces and vouches for a researcher who is new to the community. One researcher I interviewed describes this form of trust as "trust by association" (Lutz, p. 3). "With the Stó:lō I had the benefit of coming in as a colleague of [someone else] and he had worked with the Stó:lō for nine years and...he was highly respected and regarded and any friend of [his] was a friend of the community" (Lutz, p. 3). Another participant furthered this by saying that, "it's critical that I've got a tie in, I can't just be a faceless person, someone nobody vouches for, someone you never heard of" (Pence, 16).

One participant spoke about her strong and consistent presence in the community and she demonstrates her trustworthiness by being predictable. She's been researching with the same community for many years and for the past decade or more she's been visiting during University reading breaks. "I can be expected to be there so...they'll say, when are you available to do this? And then I'll say well, November or February or the summer or December..." (Saxon, p. 12).

### *Respect*

Respect is a characteristic each participant possesses. According to Brant Castellano (2004), one of the reasons that people will likely choose to engage with a researcher is if the researcher demonstrates respect. One participant notes that she grew up with respect as a value. "I inherited those cultural norms from my parents...I knew how to honour the fact that they were different from me, that they were my elder, that they were my...better. So, I knew how to do that...[be] very respectful by following certain kinds of norms of behaviour...acknowledging difference and the need to honour other people for their position and for their knowledge..." (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 4). Furthering this idea, a participant talked about the idea of working in a community and how respect plays a role there. "There's something about working in community, and having respect for those people and their cultural values and their protocols and their ways of being, no matter who they are" (Brown, p. 12).

Part of developing and maintaining trusting relationships is being respectful. Marlene Brant Castellano (2004) refers to the obligation that humans have to "learn the rules of relating to the world with respect" (p. 104) and in Indigenous communities this means honouring protocols, rituals and ceremonies. One participant described being

invited to so many community functions, that his research group “hardly had time to get [their] work done” (Lutz, p. 4) but it was important to go to events when invited, especially in the initial stages of the relationship, “...it’s really important. Even still...it has to be a pretty low level of energy before I won’t go” (Lutz, p. 5).

### *Humility*

Participants supported what was found in the literature on the concept of humility and they felt that humility was a characteristic which they each possess. “I think you need to be humble about what you don’t know...so I think I know a lot about the other culture but of course there’s just so much that I don’t have any grasp of at all” (Saxon, p. 22). According to Margaret (2010) humility is one of the qualities for being an ally and, according to one participant, being humble opens you up to new possibilities. “There’s things that people will say to me that I never, ever saw it that way, and never thought of it that way. There’s so many ah ha moments that are truly humbling...” (Ball, p. 19).

Extending the idea of humility, one participant said, “I was thinking whether it was humility, or... I’m not sure if it’s just humility...I think that’s part of it but I think another part of it is acknowledging, consciously acknowledging and valuing the difference between us...” (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 4). These differences can make research partnerships much richer and more rewarding and they can make them more challenging.

### *Worldview*

Our worldview shapes our behavior and values. When we make a value judgment, we make a statement about the way we think the world ought to be; we do this differently depending on our worldview. Shawn Wilson reminds us that some researchers believe

that there is one fixed reality, some believe that there is one reality but it is fluid and others believe that there are multiple realities (Wilson, 2001). Those who believe there is more than one reality think in a manner consistent with Indigenous epistemologies. Although some participants spoke more directly about their worldview, all of them referred to it at least indirectly. One participant noted, "I've always been very interested in seeing the world from different perspectives...I'm pretty open to a lot of different ways of living...I think that does make some difference" (Ball, p. 29). Another participant referred to different ways of knowing and being mindful that one size does not fit all,

...there's different knowledges, there's different ways of understanding the world...I wasn't coming from a positivist position that there is a truth and the key is to pass it on. I never had that orientation from the beginning, 20 years before...I had always felt that there are many, many different ways to go about supporting [people] and families and working in communities so it's not a question of looking for the right way, it's a question of looking for a way that makes sense in whatever context you're in. (Pence, p. 4)

He furthered the idea of different ways of knowing by describing how he is putting it in practice as he talked about his efforts to,

really try to understand why they're wanting to do things their way and it's not a question of whether you agree or disagree, that's sort of beside the point, but the interesting thing becomes the nature of their diversity and how that seems to be an expression of who they are, where they want to get to and trying to understand that. (Pence, p. 19)

When a researcher focuses on the needs of the community and makes understanding the community- where it has come from and where it wants to go- a priority, they are demonstrating their worldview and engaging in a level of community development. One participant says that “there’s certain ways that I take up community research which has social justice values...and community agency and community connectedness” (Brown, p. 12). The focus is on the community and what it needs. Participants were confident that communities know what they need and they know the role they want a researcher to play; it’s not often a leadership role. “If the community thinks this is where they want to get to, I’m fine to support that and that’s probably the single-most important thing,” (Pence, p. 5).

The researchers I interviewed spoke mostly about specific values that they hold and how they have enacted them in their research relationships. Before I discuss these stories, I’d like to focus on some general comments about values as shared by one participant in particular where values have a significant influence in her decision-making process. Although there are guidelines for conducting research, one participant believes that the rules help to give some guidance but “in the end it’s your personal values system that’s going to help you make those small decisions along the way that make the difference, that impact a relationship, that impact what you do” (Brown, p. 16). She believes that values are tested and that often researchers struggle with competing values. “It’s never that simple. It’s like any ethical dilemma, there are competing values both equally good and what do you do? So those sorts of things prepare you over time, so I don’t at least make the same mistake twice” (Brown, p. 18). Finally, she says that “you

live out the values and make the choices that are consistent with those values” (Brown, p. 7).

Castellano refers to such research ethics as “intimately related to who you...are the deep values you subscribe to” (Castellano, 2004, p. 103). Clearly, developing and maintaining trusting relationships is important but a researcher cannot force them into being. As one participant came to realize; “it moved me to a place [where I believe] that I can’t make trust, what I can do is just let people know I’m available until they’re ready to try me out” (Pence, p. 9).

### *Reciprocity*

One way to show respect is through reciprocity or right relationship as identified by Castellano (2004) and further developed by Russell Bishop (2003). For example, when seeking knowledge from an Elder, you should offer a gift; Castellano refers to this as “right relationship”. Bishop extends this concept to include reciprocal learning where the teacher and the learner are in a mutually beneficial relationship. According to one participant,

[Reciprocity] is a value...I mean it’s the cultural protocols that you’re taught about leaving gifts and accepting gifts. What is a gift? Data is a gift so what are your responsibilities when you accept it? What are the protocols that go along with that? So, if you’re sticking to the values of Indigenous communities, it’s pretty clear what you need to do. (Brown, p. 6)

Participants demonstrated reciprocity in many different ways ranging from those that are quite tangible and directly connected to the research to those that are intangible and completely disconnected from the research. In one case, the community believed that

they could benefit from the research that was being proposed “because all three [community members] were really concerned about the loss of their language. So they felt that if the relationship with us worked out, then it would contribute to their efforts on behalf of languages, or their language, and so, they were willing to take a chance on us because we might be able to be useful to them” (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 5). In another case, the community members who were hired to work on the research project gained transferable skills and connections that led to further work on the research topic.

[One of the community members who participated in the project] taught himself all this stuff so that he could do his job better and ended up getting really interested and started a little computer consulting company. Then one of the guys has been back to Ottawa...he goes on his own now and speaks about First Nations fatherhood. He’s linked up with the Aboriginal fatherhood movement in the States.” (Ball, p. 12)

The other examples of reciprocity that I will share are not necessarily linked to the research project. In some cases, participants wrote funding proposals so the community could get the resources deemed important as a result of the research findings and in other cases participants provided a community service such as babysitting or writing funding proposals for community initiatives that were unrelated to the research project.

Participants noted the legitimacy granted to the researcher by virtue of the doctorate that they have and can share with the community.

The other way that I get used in a good way is to borrow my alphabets. Where a community is doing research in their own way that is good research that follows their protocols, their ways of knowing but is not necessarily seen as credible

because it isn't through a university so my alphabets behind my name can help provide some legitimacy." (Brown, p. 9)

Another form of reciprocity is the tangible item(s) that is left behind after the completion of a research project. In one case, a participant was involved in some medical research with a community. Since there was no immediate benefit to the community for participating in the research, she asked members what they wanted or needed. They replied they wanted a bathtub that people with arthritis could access so she went to the lead researcher and told him that they had to put money for a bathtub in the budget.

That's what we're leaving behind so...that's the relational accountability. These people are giving their gifts, what are we going to leave behind? And yeah, there might be a greater good, but how are we going to be making a difference? We've got to leave participants better off...it's not just [do no] harm, it's leaving participants better off." (Brown, p. 5)

Other researchers commented about leaving participants better off in ways that are not connected to the research. One way is by helping out in the community.

Let's say I was asked to help out with babysitting for some reason, because somebody had to go to a meeting, or let's say I was asked to help out with the knitting class or let's say I was asked to take minutes. That's important also to help out in those small ways...or to write a grant proposal for something completely unrelated. I think where people from the University are seen as people who can write and who can do grant applications, that's how we're seen, in my experience, and so to be prepared to do seemingly unrelated small jobs which will nevertheless help out people in the community to do the work. (Saxon, p. 17)

An example of reciprocity that is likely to be completely unrelated to the research is attending community functions.

It was like every second night we were out for a salmon, and feasting and dancing. So, we got invited to so many things because over the years, we've...made enough Stó:lō people get to see what we do...we work with them, they see the benefit, they see how, where we're trying to give something to the community and they want to share." (Lutz, p. 4)

### *Relational Accountability*

Reciprocity, trust, and respect are values that, along with worldview, are connected to the concept of relational accountability. Shawn Wilson (2001) explains when you have a relationship with all that is around you, you become accountable to both animate and inanimate objects and this is described as relational accountability. Although the concept is similar, relational accountability means something different to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

Indigenous faculty, for instance, at the university, they're always accountable to their communities...Oh yes, I'm accountable to the university, I'm accountable to who I choose to be with but I don't have this community behind me that is ever present. I may choose to have one. I may choose to say, yes, this community I'm accountable to but it's up to me. My mother isn't calling me to see if I'm following the right ways. It just doesn't happen. (Brown, p. 15)

Learning how to be relationally accountable within a research relationship is important for a non-Indigenous researcher to understand. Here is an example of how one participant demonstrates relational accountability.

I'm very relational in how I proceed with research so even for interviews or data collection, the fact that we are in relationship, we are now in a relationship with each other for the rest of our lives. We may not see each other for awhile, but we have an accountability to one another now for the rest of our lives. So...if you think that way, that changes how we are together right now. If I just thought you're here for an hour and then you're gone, I don't care, then that would change how I behave with you but if I consciously think O.K. Alison and I are in this now forever, then it's going to change how we talk to each other right now and what we share with each other and it's the accountability of what you do with what I tell you, what I say to you, what I do with what you tell me. (Brown, p. 4)

A researcher who understands relational accountability and thinks of their research relationships in this way is demonstrating their respect for a fundamental aspect of an Indigenous way of knowing and being.

### *Collective Knowledge*

A fundamental difference between the ways Indigenous and non-Indigenous people understand the world is in the ways we believe knowledge is held. Wilson (2001) describes relational knowledge as knowledge that is held collectively rather than individually. Relational knowledge is also referred to as collective knowledge.

Knowledge can be held in different ways and we can think about knowledge in terms of what counts as knowledge and who determines what counts. Another way to think about knowledge is in a more concrete, practical way; for example, the knowledge you need in order to complete a task. Participants focused more on this kind of knowledge rather than on relational or collective knowledge. The kinds of information that non-Indigenous

researchers have found to be important in researching with Indigenous communities is what I will focus on now.

*Understanding the history of research in Indigenous contexts*

Participants shared an awareness of the history of research in Indigenous contexts. One stated that his interest in research with Indigenous peoples comes in part from "...an observation of a long-standing injustice and an attempt to write about it, expose it, come to terms with it...acknowledge...what happened, apologize if that means anything and moving forward..." (Lutz, p. 18). Another participant spoke about the concept of his knowledge of negative effects of working with Indigenous peoples and how this knowledge connects to the concept of risk-taking: "I think there's a lot of good research that's not getting done because people are afraid, afraid they won't do it right and they're not doing it..." (Lutz, p. 20). When researchers are sensitive to the mistakes that have been made in the past, they may feel that there's no risk in engaging in researching with Indigenous peoples. Alternatively, their fear paralyzes them and they don't engage at all.

According to Coomer (1984, in Wilson, 2003), the voices of Indigenous peoples could not often be heard in the research that was conducted prior to the 1990's so it's no surprise that community members were not involved in the process of hiring researchers to do work in their communities nor were there typically Ethical Review Boards. One of the participants recalls, "...we just started doing our work and I didn't meet any official people or anything. I had no ethics clearance of any kind. I just worked with a couple of Elders and met people casually around town and that was it" (Saxon, p.2).

I don't think there was such a thing as an Ethics Board at that time at all...It was a different world... it sounds terrible now, but it was arranged through this government connection, with no community consultation whatsoever... (Saxon, p. 2)

Another participant acknowledged that there has been a significant change over the past three decades:

Well that's how it was done 30 years ago so in a sense my work has spanned this huge, huge change and shift in understanding. A shift in what Aboriginal communities and Native American communities expect of researchers and also what outside researchers, expect of themselves. It's just a completely different situation now. (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 3)

### *Cultural Safety Model*

In the current situation, non-Indigenous researchers are expected to have some knowledge about Indigenous peoples and in particular the community in which they will be working. According to the cultural safety model, one thing that a researcher should do is to learn how the culture they are entering sees itself (Fleras, 2004). Learning as much as possible about a community is one way to do this. Two participants spoke about what they do to learn about a community and they both acknowledged that there is only so much they can learn about a community without speaking directly to community members.

I think I would put more effort into learning more about the individual communities if possible. It's not always easy to do that because sometimes it's really just a matter of learning by meeting people and by being involved but...I

think that if I were going to be involved in this kind of work extensively again, I would probably take more time to do even more reading and thinking about collaborative work than I did. (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 14)

...So every community I go into, I try and find out something about them...but I know that I will never know what another culture is really about so that's that humility again that no matter how much I read...the only people that can clarify that are people who live there, who are that culture and are living it and know the whole history..." (Ball, pp. 26-27)

Three components of the cultural safety model referred to earlier include:

understanding more about one's own culture, investigating how their culture is seen by other cultures, and examining how they see other cultures (Fleras, 2004). Even though few participants had heard of the cultural safety model, some made connections to the model's components indirectly. For example, one participant found that as a result of being immersed in another culture, she was able to better understand her own culture and herself. Another participant reflected on the times,

...when we ask Indigenous people to step into our world and engage with us in scholarly research we're also stepping into their world and trying to understand their protocols and I think of it as, I think of the question from a couple of different perspectives. But sometimes I think of this as the inside/outsider kind of thing...that in a sense we do try to walk...We're trying to become enough of an insider so we understand what they're saying...We can never cease being an outsider but in order to be good at what we do, we have to be able to see ourselves from the outside. (Lutz, p. 18)

The concept of cultural competence arose and reference was also made to the term exotopy as it connects with a component of the cultural safety model. "...[Exotopy] is the notion that we have to find the space to look at our own culture from the outside and the best way to do that is to engage with some other culture" (Lutz, p. 18) to see how another culture views your culture.

One participant outlines her understanding of the difference between cultural competence/sensitivity and cultural safety. She starts by defining "cultural safety as an experience that one has, so one feels either safe or not safe" (Ball, p. 26), however, with cultural competency/sensitivity it's the characteristic of the provider or the researcher or the practitioner" (Ball, p. 26) that is the focus. According to the participant, cultural competency/sensitivity training can make a person "feel more ready" (Ball, p. 26) to engage respectfully with another culture so she sees nothing wrong with it. Where she sees a problem is when the focus is on the cultural competence/sensitivity of a person instead of where it should be which is on the person(s) they are engaging with- does that person feel safe or not? "[The person] might not have felt safe no matter how much training you had or if you were really good at what you were doing, they didn't feel safe" (Ball, p. 26). So, shifting from a focus on the competence of the provider to focusing on the experience of the person with whom they are interacting is key and supported by participants in this study. According to another participant,

I've always resisted the notion of cultural competencies and the concept of cultural safety backs off from the idea that you have to learn everything about the other which doesn't get us anywhere so, I think there's a lot more potential in concepts of cultural safety. (Brown, p. 13)

### *Self-identity*

Participants felt that working in Indigenous contexts requires a researcher to consider their identity and their role in the research relationship. As Kvale (1996, in Lather, 2006) notes, “What and why have to be answered before how questions of design can be meaningful” (Kvale, 1996, p. 95 in Lather, 2006, p. 47). According to one participant a researcher needs to “be really clear as to why [they] want to do it and be prepared to talk about that and defend it or change it or whatever. So that’s part of defining the purpose of the research question.” (Brown, p. 24).

An example of where a researcher would need to consider why they want to do research in an Indigenous context is when they introduce themselves to community members.

How am I going to introduce myself, who am I in relation to Bhutan? I mean I’m different in relation to Bhutan than I am in relation to northern Ontario in terms of who I am, what I know, what I am familiar with. (Ball, p. 27)

I have also had experiences with introductions specifically with respect to their role in relationship-building. As I mentioned in the introductory chapter, having friends or colleagues in common can help to form trust. Through my introduction, I share information about who I am, where I come from and how the person I’m introducing myself to and I might be connected. In my experience, as soon as you make a connection through an introduction, trust begins to form and a relationship starts to develop. Being accountable for who you are is important to participants. They gave examples of how they ‘check’ themselves so that they are holding themselves accountable for who they are

so that they don't become complacent. One participant practices a strategy she calls, "holding a mirror up to yourself" (Brown, p. 24). She does this so that she's,

...aware of the assumptions that come from of who I am. Figure out for yourself how you can develop strategies for holding a mirror up to yourself so that your assumptions around working with Indigenous peoples in communities as a non-Indigenous woman are visible, that you're never comfortable. How do you keep yourself unsettled as a settler? That's the strategy to always try to keep yourself uncomfortable. And if you can deal with always being uncomfortable and still want to move forward, then...that's a great start. (Brown, p. 24)

According to Margaret (2010), allies need to be "prepared to sit with the unsettling nature of work and with discomfort" (p. 14). Working cross-culturally can be difficult because of the miscommunication that can come with diversity.

I think you have to have shaken yourself, in one way or another, out of certain assumptions that we're all the same, that *this* is the best way. You need to have experienced a certain level of discomfort..and lived with it long enough to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. (Pence, p. 6)

The ways that researchers identify themselves is connected to how they view their role in the research relationship. According to Wilson, they "fulfill their role in the research relationship through their methodology" (Wilson, 2001, p. 177). Participants identified many different roles that they take on in their research relationships. Most of them can be categorized as support rather than leadership positions. Examples include the following:

- playing a technical role or an informational role

- co-publishing
- helping to build and “validate the capacity of communities to do research...”  
(Brown, p. 10)
- sitting on advisory boards
- reviewing reports
- being a bridge or boundary person who works to develop understanding and relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples
- being “a translator to make sure the process was good” (Brown, p. 3), and
- being “a witness of people’s knowledge” (Brown, p. 10)

This study’s findings support the what was found in the literature on the following characteristics, values, knowledge and skills that non-Indigenous researchers who have sustained partnerships in research with Indigenous people might have: responsibility and trust, respect, humility, worldview, reciprocity, relational accountability, collective knowledge, understanding of the negative effects of research that has been conducted in Indigenous contexts, the cultural safety model, and self-identity. In the next section, I will focus on the characteristics, values, knowledge and skills that emerged from the participants’ stories but were largely absent from in the literature. This section also includes the personal, cultural and educational experiences that have contributed to who the participants are as people and as researchers who have sustained relationships with Indigenous peoples.

## Findings that Add to the Literature

### Characteristics, Values, Knowledge and Skills

In this section, I highlight the characteristics, values, knowledge and skills that emerged from the participants' stories and add to the literature. Characteristics and values include: withholding judgement, flexibility, and self care, while knowledge comprises space, politics, and subject area competency. Soft skills include: listening, suppressing one's ego, divesting power, connecting. Hard skills include: competency in the research process and data stewardship.

#### *Withholding judgment*

In addition to being part of building and maintaining trusting, respectful relationships engaging in community events is a useful way to learn about the community in which you're working. Augie Fleras refers to this kind of engagement as one of the four components of the concept of squared articulation which is a key part of the cultural safety model (2004). By participating in the kind of reflexive practice central to this model, Fleras believes that researchers are encouraged to "suspend values and assumptions in interpreting other people's culture or behavior" (p. 127) which leads to more respectful ways of working together. One participant referred to this as "withholding judgment" (Ball, p. 28).

There were some things I saw in a country I was working in that I was just horrified by and I thought oh, my...and I wanted to just leap to a decision and a very negative judgment about some people in a village and I thought, you don't know. I had to pull myself up short and say, you have no idea...you don't know.

Just don't judge it...there's got to be a reason so just a little bit of holding back...just be slow to judge and slow to come to conclusions. (Ball, p. 28)

Another participant referred to the importance of withholding judgment about male and female roles in the community where she works.

So there's lots of different cultural norms about male and female behaviours...men's and women's roles in the...community are traditionally quite different. There's no use really saying it's not right...that's just the way it is...some people certainly think they will change the community to make it better... (Saxon, p. 16)

Overall, participants did not think it was appropriate for them to judge what they saw in a community and they did not feel that it was their role to change the community if the people did not want to change.

### *Flexibility*

Demonstrating flexibility was a characteristic that was not well-documented in the literature but it arose as an important quality through the data collected and in some cases it was paired with being prepared. One participant received advice from a community member about the two qualities she felt a researcher should have.

...be flexible and be prepared...I think she was talking about cultural values in her culture so to be a respected worker or someone that contributed to your community, those are some qualities that you should have. You should be prepared to do whatever, you should be prepared for whatever might happen...you should be prepared to be ready to step in. You should be flexible

because things might change. So by that, I took it to be that to be flexible and prepared means you have to be prepared for anything. (Saxon, p. 13)

Participants gave several examples of ways that they demonstrate flexibility. Some researchers focus on answering questions posed by the community rather than furthering their own research agenda. Others take on research projects focused on Indigenous contexts or issues only when Indigenous communities demonstrate an interest in the topic. What was consistent among all participants was an awareness of and sensitivity to timing,

...if you're working in partnership you have to make a decision about [whether] you're going to insist- as this outsider researcher- on your research questions or whether you're going to acknowledge to yourself that they're really important but now's not the time to ask them...Maybe they are really important and interesting but they are not going to work in that context with that group, with that individual. Then if you insist on it as the outside researcher, it's not going to work out or you're going to end up having a conflict and you're going to cause yourself and the group you're working with grief. And so, there's a kind of flexibility that's required, a willingness to accept that what you may even know is right might not work in the context you're in. (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 11)

Another participant echoed Czaykowska-Higgins's concern about the timing of asking certain questions, "it's not that they're bad questions or they shouldn't be asked sometime but this is not the time" (Ball, p. 35). Ball furthered the idea of timing when she stated that it's not only important to prepare researchers to do the work but it's also important for them to know how to recognize whether it's

the right time for a non-Indigenous person [to do the work] and is the right time for this question or this methodology? Even though, in the abstract you could say, well it's all right but is it right at this time for these people in this country or this context? (Ball, p. 36)

Being sensitive to issues of timing, participants demonstrate an awareness of their role as researchers and respect for their relationships in the community.

### *Self Care*

One value that was not part of the literature that I reviewed but was revealed through the interviews is self-care. Some participants talked about a fear of getting “burnt out” (Saxon, p. 18) and that some aspects of working in Indigenous contexts can be “very draining and emotionally exhausting” (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 18). Each participant in this study is aware of the negative effects research and researchers can have on Indigenous peoples. Knowing and respecting an Indigenous community's protocols and procedures can be challenging for a non-Indigenous researcher who knows how important it is to honour the protocols and procedures yet may not be familiar with them. Indigenous ways of knowing include an emotional and spiritual component with which non-Indigenous researchers may not be familiar and it may be difficult for a researcher to engage in different ways of knowing. Because the researchers I interviewed are sensitive to the unique context of researching with Indigenous peoples, they focus on conducting their research in ways that honour different ways of knowing and they respect the community's protocols and procedures so that their research processes and outcomes support the communities and individuals with whom they work . This can be difficult work on an emotional level so it is important to consider ways to take care of oneself as a

researcher. One participant spoke about proactive ways in which she takes care of herself and her colleagues in a research project.

One of the things we do quite regularly to I guess prepare, maintain...the work is hard work so we quite regularly have brushing-offs or other kinds of ceremonies for ourselves, for our research assistants, for the people who did the transcriptions...there are ways of taking care of yourself and one another that I think are important...what works for each of us varies so being able to be respectful of different people's way of taking care of themselves is important.

(Brown, p. 20)

Another way that a researcher can prepare to engage in research, especially in an Indigenous context is to make a plan to care for your spirit.

One of the things that I hadn't quite realized we do in all of our projects, and I do with every student that I supervise, as part of the preparation is to talk about how you're going to take care of your spirit through your project...so there's the plan for how you're going to collect your data but how are you going to take care of your spirit and yourself. That's got to be built into the ethics, that's part of the ethical plan, the proposal. So that's preparing oneself for research in relation to whatever the topic is and the people...And that's hard for white folk to wrap their head around. And that's something particularly if people are going to be working in Indigenous communities, if they haven't stopped to wrap their head around it, then they're going to get in the glue. So, having those conversations is part of the preparation, I'd say. (Brown, 21)

Having concluded the findings on the topic of values, I now move into the findings from the second part of research question two. As a reminder, research question two is: What values, knowledge and skills do non-Indigenous researchers find important in researching with Indigenous communities? I will now focus on knowledge.

### *Space*

Although it is not well-documented in the literature I reviewed, during discussions about the researcher's role, several participants spoke about the idea of space; making space and taking space. One participant talked about making space by creating a position within the research team that would "help to create space for the Elders to do what they could do best" (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 16). Another participant questioned her role with respect to making and taking space. "...how do you take some space and through that make some space for others and then get out of the way? ...learn to get out of the way. That's part of the job" (Brown, p. 8).

According to Margaret (2010), when researchers learn to 'get out of the way', they are demonstrating a practice aligned with being an ally with Indigenous people in the research process. One participant noted the difficulty with trying to be an ally. "One of the things that I sometimes puzzle over though is... now we're trying to work as allies, whether we don't sometimes kind of overdo it in the other direction...for example, if we think of ourselves as helpers, we're still perpetuating the colonial relationships" (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 19). In an effort to make up for the often unethical research done on Indigenous peoples of the past, another participant sees that, as researchers "we throw all kinds of barriers in front of ourselves when it might be coming to work with First Nations where we might be a useful ally" (Lutz, p. 19).

### *Politics*

While the literature broached the topic of politics with respect to protocol (Castellano, 2004) and the definition of community (Smith, 1999), it was not well-documented. However, several participants spoke about politics as it connects to their work as researchers. Most referred to the role politics plays in the communities in which they've worked and one participant focused on research as a political tool. Others had experienced the divides that often exist in any community and Indigenous communities are no different. "There's no single voice in any community and First Nations communities tend, in my experience, at least the coastal ones I know, to be as divided as any non-Native and perhaps more" (Lutz, p. 8). This participant went on to further describe the structure of Indigenous communities:

Historically...the family is the main organizational unit...so the communities are very much divided by families and if you happen to be a researcher who gets invited into the community through one family, you're golden with that family but you may be persona non grata with some of the other families or certainly have an awkward time. (Lutz, p. 9)

One participant believes that, as a researcher, "you need to make yourself known to the political people, whatever protocols there are, however it works in the community..." (Saxon, p. 19). Another participant had a different experience:

...I got introduced to [a community member who knew the language] through somebody else, so when I first started working with her, [I said] I think I should probably go and ask permission from the Band Council to work with you and she said, 'don't you dare do that' she said, 'what business is it of theirs what I do, if I

want to teach you my language, why should you ask them' and she was very clear that she did not want me to go to the Band Council. (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 6)

Although most participants spoke about politics as something that exists in the communities, one was quite passionate about research as a

...political tool and my job is, in teaching and doing research, is to figure out how Indigenous people can use research as a political tool for social justice, that's been my mission, since that time, is to research...In 2005 that book comes up, *Research as Resistance*, it's all about the politics of how do I become part of the solution and use research, which is my tool that I've been trained to do, how do I use that and how do I help others to use that on our decolonizing journey? (Brown, p. 3)

### *Subject Area Competency*

Another area that is not well-developed in the literature is competency in the area in which you are researching. As one participant put it, what the community "...was coming to me for was [my knowledge- they were saying] we need a program and it needs to be credible- it needs to be seen as being good in the eyes of authorities as well as good in our eyes" (Pence, p. 17). The community knew that the researcher had a reputation of being competent and he had knowledge that they needed.

Although there are many recommendations about what researchers should know before engaging in research with Indigenous peoples, one participant reminds us,

...that there isn't a recipe. We've got the four R's, we've got [Ownership, Control, Access and Possession], it all sounds like lots of recipes; you just follow these recipes but...we've learned that [Indigenous peoples] are so incredibly diverse from one individual to the next, one community to the next. There isn't

one way to approach research or one way of doing and it will always change over time. (Ball, p. 35)

Knowledge alone is not enough to prepare a researcher to engage in research in an Indigenous context; the researcher must also have skills. The literature I reviewed focuses on the skill of relationship building (Wilson, 2001; Menzies, 2001; Menzies, 2004; Weber-Pillwax, 2001; Castellano, 2004; Fleras, 2004). Castellano (2004) identifies ways that a research can develop a relationship through showing respect through reciprocity; giving an Elder tobacco in exchange for asking them to share their wisdom with you. Menzies (2001) outlines how trust is developed in order to establish a relationship and Bishop (2003) discusses the concept reciprocal learning where the teacher and the learner are in a mutually beneficial relationship.

The data I collected supports the skills of relationship building, which I found in the literature. Evidence of how participants demonstrate their relationship-building skills can be found throughout the findings of research question one (characteristics) and in the values and knowledge sections of research question two. Here, I will focus on the ways that participants expanded on the concept of relationship building and the skills that have supported them to work sustainably in Indigenous contexts that were not part of the literature I reviewed.

### *Listening*

The first soft skill I will discuss is listening. In order to get to know and understand a community and its members, a researcher needs to learn to listen. As one participant suggests, "...put yourself in positions where you can just listen and not talk. That's the skill we don't teach researchers. We do teach them how to ask questions but

we don't teach them how to hear the answers. It's the hardest part..." (Brown, p. 25).

Listening and hearing are important skills in relationship-building.

### *Suppress Your Ego*

The second soft skill is 'suppressing your ego.' The concept of suppressing your ego arose from the data as a way to build and maintain a relationship. "...It's not insisting on what is mine in this as the researcher but being open to sharing, to negotiation, to listening, especially to listening, and to suppress their self-interest" (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 8). By suppressing her ego, the researcher shows that she values the relationship she has with the community as much or more that she values her own personal or professional interests.

### *Divesting Power*

The third soft skill is divesting power. Participants were sensitive to the potential inequality that might exist between a researcher and the community and they were aware of the negative effect this could have on their ability to build relationships. However, one participant spoke of a way to overcome this potential negative situation by divesting power whenever possible.

To have the community or the students...take over as many of these different functions as possible...to divest yourself of as many different power pieces as you can...you'll never be one of the people, but if you have all the power and all the pieces...then that's a [problematic] place to work from, I think. (Pence, p. 14)

### *Connecting*

Finally, the last soft skill I will discuss is connecting. Learning how to connect with people is important and it's different doing it in an Indigenous context.

You see that so often with First Nations when they get-together, oh, you're from so-and-so, my cousin married so-and-so and so on! So, you know, I definitely do that. I introduce who I am and my ancestry which doesn't effectively connect me to anybody in Canada really but then I'll mention that I was involved in something else Indigenous that people come up to me and say, 'did you know so-and-so there, that's my brother-in-law's niece' or whatever. So there is that need to situate people and not with reference to their university. (Ball, p. 16)

By respecting and engaging in the ways that many Indigenous peoples make connections with and situate each other through reference to family members and other personal connections, a non-Indigenous researcher supports and encourages the development of relationships with Indigenous peoples. These kinds of relationships are based on honouring the traditions, protocols, and procedures of the Indigenous community.

The literature I reviewed lacks depth in the area of hard skills that participants in this study think matter to them as non-Indigenous researchers working in Indigenous contexts. They referred to hard skills such as competency in the research process and data stewardship.

#### *Competency in the Research Process*

Participants felt that it was important for researchers to demonstrate competency in the research process and they describe many ways that they engaging in research "...for a particular purpose that is supportive of Indigenous peoples" (Brown, p. 3). One participant outlined how not being tied to one research focus has supported her work.

I've always been a generalist and I think that predisposed me really well to be responsive to these things...So I think that's actually extremely key...I just

thought well I guess I can do that if I have the right colleagues, you know and partner with people who do have the specialty. (Ball, p. 4)

Although participants generally chose to work with Indigenous communities when offered the chance, the concept of saying no to a research project was raised by a few participants in different contexts. The first spoke about saying no as it relates to a research ethic. If you choose to engage in a research project when you shouldn't,

...then you're not going to do good research because you can't be genuine and authentic in that and enter it properly, you're not ready, the timing's not right. So, framing it as a research ethic actually helps in being able to decide if you can step in it or out of it. Because then it's not just this selfish thing to do..." (Brown, p. 22)

On the other hand, a participant spoke about a community's belief that as a researcher, "...you show your commitment by not saying no" (Saxon, p. 12). She clarified this by stating that "...if I'm not capable of something, I certainly say no" (Saxon, p. 14). One participant had witnessed situations where "the community would have [been] better [off] if they would have said no...there are some of those consultants that I've come across; they have good relations but I feel like they've taken on too much for too long. They don't have an exit plan and that's problematic" (Pence, p. 17).

### *Data Stewardship*

Although absent from the literature I reviewed, participants referred to specific techniques and methods they use to build relationships through the research process including data stewardship using MOU's and MOA's.

According to one participant “...research is about data so having data stewardship and knowing before you even agree to get into a study, what will be the data stewardship agreements that are expected. I guess that’s one key thing” (Ball, 23). Another participant says, “...I never start collecting data until the rez [reserve] dogs know me. So it’s a litmus test of how long have you been in the community? And are you ready now to even collect data” (Brown, p. 4)?

One way to establish understandings about data stewardship is to create a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or a memorandum of agreement (MOA). These agreements can be tools for establishing and maintaining relationships. In one case, the community agreed that the researcher had “...negotiated a very clear memorandum of understanding and memorandum of agreement that [they] discussed for the last year and worked out together” (Ball, p. 23). This MOU/MOA was a crucial document for the community to refer back to when they needed to verify that the research project was progressing as they had agreed.

### **Participants’ Prior Life Experiences**

Participants shared many prior life experiences that could be placed in one or more of the three categories (personal, cultural, educational). For example, they spoke about personal experiences that could be considered cultural and vice-versa. In addition, some shared stories that could be thought of as professional experiences; I have placed these in the educational experiences category. Participants’ stories range from experiences they had as children, with influences from family and community, to experiences that have influenced them as adults. All stories offer insights into how

participants' experiences that have shaped who they are as people and as researchers who have worked sustainably with Indigenous peoples.

### *Personal Experiences*

Participants' life experiences are diverse. One grew up with "small l liberal parents...where one weekend you go to the Jewish synagogue, the next weekend you go to the United Church, the next weekend we're taking you out to the rez [reserve] for the weekend" (Brown, p. 1). One participant "...was brought up in [an]...immigrant community and there are very clear protocols about how you interact with people...I inherited those cultural norms from my parents" (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 4). Another participant had a strong religious upbringing that influenced her openness to other forms of spirituality. Although none identified having strong connections to an Indigenous people or communities, while they were growing up, one participant who was raised near a reservation noted that,

I actually started to become sensitive to Indigenous issues when I was a child...I remember that my parents had said you can roar around on your bikes all you want, anywhere you want to go but just don't go beyond where the paved road ends and the gravel road begins [that is where the reserve begins] and the dogs start chasing your bikes. That was usually [the reason] we were given, because the dogs will chase your bikes, it's not safe. And we knew that the dogs would chase our bikes but you know, over the years, I started asking questions like, why isn't that road paved and what is beyond the paved road and why are there vanilla extract bottles in the grass all around the place where the road ends? (Ball, p. 1)

As she says, “it wasn’t until I got to high school when I... actually got to know some girls from the reserve and I still didn’t really understand much...so that curiosity was just there and I had quite a bit of contact or near miss contact you know, the whole time I was growing up” (Ball, p. 1).

Another participant recalls the first time he encountered Indigenous peoples was when he was growing up

...and my father [directed] the college and...my earliest memories of the Warm Springs [reservation] was my dad talking about his [native] friend [that individual] was...the executive director of Warm Springs, who was very much a business man, very sharp, and they were buying a lumber mill at that point and inviting the college to come and do courses on reserve and there was a very good working relationship. I never heard my father or anybody he worked with talk about the negative stories, they weren’t a part of my growing up. I heard them later [in other contexts] and was somewhat surprised by them because that hadn’t really been my orientation...I don’t have any memory [from my childhood] of the Other being *less-than*, kind of thing; they’re Other but they’re not less-than. So that had an influence. (Pence, p. 10)

On a more personal level, one participant who grew up on the Canadian prairies noted,

...as my husband said, he and I didn’t realize that we were in a multi-racial marriage until we moved out here [to Victoria]. We have a cross-cultural marriage- it had never occurred to either of us until we were in Safeway one day and this old lady and old man behind us were muttering, that’s disgusting. ‘What are they talking about?’ And then we realized they were talking about us and we

were telling some friends and they said well that's because you're a mixed-race couple. 'We are? We didn't know that.' And then we started to see how people were seeing us and so what opportunities does that bring? What can we do with that? Because it had never occurred to us. So, I think different things happen when you're in different contexts. (Brown, p. 8)

She went on to say,

somehow my history of working with Indigenous peoples and the fact that I was married to an Indigenous man and had Indigenous kids and was connected in community, all of a sudden, I was seen as knowing something about Indigenous people. At first I was very resentful of that because I thought I'm not the expert, talk to them, not me, right? But somewhere along the line, I decided to take up what was being thrust upon me which was to be a bridge kind of position, the boundary person. (Brown, p. 1)

When someone is in this kind of boundary position, it means that they are working as an ally (Margaret, 2010). As Margaret states, "some people are positioned as bridge-builders working between indigenous and non-indigenous communities..." (p. 13). Often people who work in this bridging position advocate for those who are marginalized, however only one participant referenced a childhood connection to marginalization:

The other side of that personal experience was that social institutions didn't work very well for me while I was growing up...and I think that in many ways I see myself as having grown up on the margins psychologically and so people who are marginalized or for whom social institutions aren't working are usually people I'm interested in and somehow engaging with...these just come naturally to me

‘cause I experienced that growing up. I thought well, if there isn’t room for me in this diversity, then it’s not diverse enough... (Ball, p. 30)

Another participant picked up on the idea of marginalization. Having travelled to a Muslim country as a youth, he realized, at a young age, what it feels like to *be* the Other.

So by the time I got to the experience as a 22 year old, on the Umatilla reservation, I could identify with being the Other and I guess I was primarily wrestling with my role as a professional, what is my role here,...? (Pence, p. 11)

Early on in their careers, many participants learned to consider their roles as non-Indigenous people working in Indigenous contexts so when they became researchers, they knew that it was important to reflect on their position and how they could support the work of the Indigenous peoples with whom they have research partnerships.

### *Cultural Experiences*

Cultural experiences shape why and how participants work as researchers in Indigenous contexts. Travelling and living in other parts of the world has provided some participants with an understanding of what it’s like to not be a member of the dominant culture, “...when I was 18, I was a student in Iran for six months and...I was very much the Other” (Pence, p. 10).

Living overseas also can help a person gain a different perspective on their home country and in particular, in this participant’s case, Indigenous people in Canada and her role as a researcher.

So then I went away for twenty years and then I was in Malaysia, I was working there and lived there for eight years...and then we went to Singapore and spent some years there and so it wasn’t until we were actually on the ferry, here,

coming to relocate to Victoria, we were on the ferry and I looked around and I thought, I looked at all the trees, and I thought, you know what, there's a story here that's almost the same as the story in Malaysia... and maybe I should learn more about that 'cause it could answer a lot of questions I've had since my childhood and besides, now that I was relocating back to Canada as a different person than I was when I'd grown up, that maybe I had some responsibility to citizenship and to my kids to learn more about what really has gone on here. So, that was kind of the beginning. (Ball p. 1)

Cultural experiences do not have to come from travelling overseas. One participant's identity was solidified as a result of a cultural experience with an Indigenous community in Canada. "I definitely feel bi-cultural myself. I became very aware of these issues of identity on a certain occasion which was...I was invited to a traditional fish camp" (Saxon, p. 22). She was one of only a few non-Native people at the camp but she had family connections through her relationship with a community member, and she spoke the language to some degree.

That [experience] was very important to me and important to my understanding of identity issues. The...community has a motto which is "strong like two people"...so I think that at that fish camp I really saw how it applied to me...because it's always applied to the...people: [for them] "strong like two people" means knowing your...culture and also attending school and learning the White man's ways...participating in both cultures. Therefore, you are doubly

strong. So I recognized finally that it applied to me in the other way... (Saxon, p. 22)

Having different cultural experiences has set the foundation for participants to be open to different perspectives about how and what it means to be in this world.

I've had experience of living in a lot of different kinds of environments so I do think there a lot of different ways of achieving the same outcomes in life- the outcomes that matter, like being alive or dead, experiencing love or not. I think there are a lot of different ways that people can do things and have it work out ...”

(Ball, p. 29)

Participants in this study understand and respect that there are different ways of living and being in the world. Having this kind of knowledge and perspective has supported them to engage respectfully with Indigenous peoples who likely embody different worldviews than the researcher.

### *Educational Experiences*

Along with personal and cultural experiences, prior learning includes the educational experiences that have influenced the work of non-Indigenous researchers who work in Indigenous contexts. Participants spoke of educational experiences as formal and informal. Most formal learning occurred before their work as researchers including completing undergraduate and graduate degrees in disciplines such as: History, Psychology, Linguistics, and Social Work. Some participants focused specifically on Indigenous topics, for example: First Nations historical participation in the labour force, a

northwest Native American language and one particular language spoken in northern Canada.

Some participants worked as research assistants during their undergraduate and/or graduate years.

So in '77, I went with [the researcher I was assisting] to the Northwest Territories (NWT) as her research assistant...I didn't prepare myself to...do research with Indigenous people but it was trial by fire, in a way. I mean it was great, obviously it was great or I wouldn't have kept doing it. (Saxon, p. 1)

Other participants had professional experiences prior to becoming researchers; "...most of us have worked in the field" (Pence, p. 6) that contribute to their choice and ability to work as researchers in Indigenous contexts. For example, one participant began her career as a social worker and ran the Regina Friendship Centre's youth department before becoming a professor.

One participant worked as a program director early in his career and although he was aware that he had information,

...it wasn't necessarily what the community needed or wanted...I just had to stand back and that was useful for me to have had that [experience]. I had been cured of saving people with education and had actually moved to a place of being very curious about how can we change education and approach things in a different way because [what we're doing] doesn't work. (Pence, p. 5)

Participants noted that having professional experiences in Indigenous contexts both influenced their decision and their ability to engage in research with Indigenous peoples later in their careers.

On some levels, working as a non-Indigenous researcher in Indigenous contexts is more challenging than doing research in other contexts. However, one participant finds some aspects,

...much easier than working in a university context because there's way less pressure in some ways on a personal level. There's a lot of understanding and respect for just who you are and what your needs are as family members...that is one thing that has really balanced it out for me. I really, really appreciate and respect that. (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 22)

Although most participants engaged in formal educational opportunities before they began researching in Indigenous contexts, one participant indicated that completed formal training through the UVic LE, NONET Staff and Faculty Aboriginal Cultural Training after she had been researching with Indigenous peoples for several years so even though she had experience, she was open to new formal education that she felt helped her as a researcher.

Most participants told stories of how they've learned to research with Indigenous peoples through informal learning opportunities such as learning from the community in which they are working. As one participant says, "...we went out to those communities and learned a lot from those guys about recruiting and about fatherhood and about the trauma some of these guys have experienced just telling their stories. So that was mutual learning" (Ball, p. 13) that might not have occurred in a formal educational experience.

One participant shared a story of a very hard lesson she learned through working with a community. She was hired by a government funded program to do some research with a particular Indigenous. She did the work with the community including "all the

things that one should be doing when working with community- their questions- great piece of research" (Brown, p. 15). In the beginning she told the community

you own the data, this is your data, you can withdraw at any time so at the end reports are all done and everything, they said, remember you said this was ours?

We've decided we're not going to let you give it to the [funder]. (Brown, p. 15)

She had nothing to give the sponsor, "not one piece of data, not one interview, I can give you nothing, not a sentence on a piece of paper" (Brown, p. 15). She was asked to write an alternative report but she chose not to.

That was a big decision point because I could have tried to mediate something and convince the community to let me take this piece and write it. I could have done that but in the end I was confronted with my own promise...Now in the end, I stood my ground and no one ever knows what community I was in and the sponsor got not a word and it's just a time blank in my life but I was tested on do I really believe what I tell people because it's one thing to be able to talk this open relationship...it's another one to actually [do it]. I'm not sure I did the right thing in the end by just not trying to do something...I don't know but I did what I did because I felt like I'd been called on it and I had to stand up for what I had personally promised. Because you are in relationship for the rest of your life and this is something about my relationship with people, Indigenous peoples, communities, research, participants, whoever. It was in my own head I rationalized it as no, you've got to stick to your guns, you said it was theirs and you can't walk away, you promised them... (Brown, p. 15)

This story is an example of how a researcher demonstrated a value-based way of engaging in research where she learned a valuable lesson about making and keeping promises.

Another participant shared an example of how she has learned from colleagues and

...Other non-Native researchers, like the research coordinator of the Elders research group, who is an anthropologist. I've learned a lot from her about community-based research and...how it can be done so that the direction of research comes from the Elders or whoever it's supposed to be doing it...So, I've just had some great mentors over the years. (Saxon, p. 20)

Mentoring is important and can come from sources other than the community where you are researching.

...With lots of advice from [my husband], the family, the communities hear about how you do that or how you don't...so I'd say I've had mentoring, strong mentoring, not gentle, but strong mentoring about when you step up, when you don't, what your responsibilities are, who you're accountable to when you do this. (Brown, p. 2)

Participants' stories ranged from experiences they had as children with influences from family and community to experiences that have influenced them as adults.

Participants' prior life experiences (personal, cultural, and educational) offered several insights into the ways in which they have been shaped as people and as researchers who have worked sustainably with Indigenous peoples. Participants' experiences have

influenced the development of the characteristics, values, knowledge and skills that have supported them in their work with Indigenous peoples.

### **Summary**

In this chapter I revealed the data collected through the narrative inquiry process which included six non-Indigenous University of Victoria researchers who have worked sustainably in partnership with Indigenous communities for at least five years. Overall, participants' stories corroborated and enriched what we already know about doing research with Indigenous peoples in a good way. Characteristics, values, knowledge, skills which were not well-documented in the literature but were deemed to be important to participants include: flexibility, withholding judgment, space, subject area knowledge, and formative experiences. In chapter five I will provide an overall summary of this research study including implications and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

This study sought to investigate the experiences of non-Indigenous researchers at the University of Victoria who have worked sustainably in Indigenous contexts. In order to understand the preparation and experiences that non-Indigenous allies require to be effective partners in research with and for Indigenous communities, I considered the following questions:

1. What characterizes non-Indigenous allies who have researched sustainably in partnership with Indigenous communities?
2. What values, knowledge and skills do non-Indigenous researchers find important in researching with Indigenous communities?
3. What experiences (cultural, personal, and educational) do non-Indigenous researchers consider to have shaped their abilities to research with Indigenous communities?

The purpose of the research was to move us beyond the existing recipe-style procedures documents to a deeper understanding of the ways researchers prepare themselves and engage in respectful research partnerships with Indigenous peoples. This chapter will present an overall summary of the content and the process, and implications including recommendations for future research and suggestions for practice.

## Overall Summary

This qualitative inquiry expanded and supported the available body of literature on Indigenous research methodologies. This research is significant because it revealed insights into the experiences of non-Indigenous researchers working in Indigenous contexts which is largely absent from the literature.

The findings from this study indicated support for much of what the literature suggests are the values, skills, knowledge and behaviours connected to researching respectfully and sustainably in Indigenous contexts. Participants shared examples of how they have developed and maintain respectful, long-term relationships built on trust and reciprocity. They shared stories that highlight their way of seeing the world and they connected their worldview to their ability to research in partnership with Indigenous communities.

The findings also indicate that researchers have been prepared to work in Indigenous contexts in a variety of ways. Those who embody what could be called an ally-based orientation and who employ decolonizing methodologies are the ones who engage in sustainable researcher partnerships with Indigenous peoples. This inquiry provided specific data connected to the characteristics, knowledge, values, skills, and experiences (personal, cultural, educational) of the non-Indigenous researchers. Participants shared stories and examples of how they 'lived out' their values through the decisions they made and they reflected on the ways that their life experiences have impacted their choice and ability to engage in research with Indigenous communities. It was clear that no single path was followed; participants grew up in different contexts and had different experiences in youth and adulthood. What is common among them is an

orientation towards respecting different ways of being in the world and a desire to understand and support people to follow their own path.

Findings from this study revealed that while all participants engage in what can be referred to as decolonizing methodologies and ally-based practices and processes, each participant was at a different stage in their ability to reflect on their own practices. It's unclear whether this variance is due to individual or disciplinary differences and it is worthy of future inquiry.

Participants support Indigenous peoples who are working to decolonize themselves so that self-determination can be achieved. An example of how participants engage in the process of decolonization is when they attempt to see outside the ways in which they were socialized and try to understand other ways of being and doing. By doing this they open themselves up for engagement that is not based on a colonial mindset, rather it allows them to recognize, respect and support the community's goals and in the bigger picture, Indigenous peoples' quest for self-determination.

Although it's important for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to decolonize themselves (Battiste, 1998, Smith, 1999), there is an additional role that non-Indigenous people can play; the role of an ally. Both Ann Bishop, in her 1994 book, *Becoming an Ally* and Jen Margaret's 2010 paper, *Working as Allies*, outline the practices and processes of allies and allied work. Margaret concludes that it is more important to focus on the behaviours and actions associated with being an ally and not with identity. You can call yourself an ally but "the concept [of being an ally] can become meaningless if its use is not aligned with action. You are only an ally for as long as you keep acting as an ally" (Margaret, 2010, p. 11). As an on-going practice, it's learned and developed

through experience. The stories participants in my research study shared indicate that they engage in practices and processes that are consistent with the work of allies. Here is a small sample of those processes and practices: they identify as bridge-builders, they listen as people speak from different world views, and they enable Indigenous voices to be heard. All of these practices support participants in their roles as allies and in turn advance the Indigenous people with whom they work in their efforts to grow and develop towards a decolonizing, self-determined place.

The outcomes of this research provide insights into both the personal and professional lives of non-Indigenous researchers working in Indigenous contexts. No other study investigating the experiences of such researchers has been conducted. Therefore, the findings from this study may provide a baseline for further research and support the work of current and future research with Indigenous peoples. Because this study was completed with a limited number of researchers (six), subsequent research studies could be conducted with other non-Indigenous researchers working in Indigenous contexts in order to compare and contrast with the data collected in this study. By shedding light on the formative experiences that have contributed to the participants' ability to research respectfully with Indigenous peoples, other non-Indigenous researchers who are interested in research in Indigenous contexts may be able to better gauge their own readiness for this kind of work. The findings also provide examples of the types of personal, cultural and educational experiences that one may consider in order to prepare to engage in research with Indigenous peoples.

The present findings support a role for non-Indigenous researchers that is consistent with Shawn Wilson's concept of an Indigenist research paradigm where it is

the choice to follow the paradigm that makes the work Indigenist, “not the ethnic or racial identity of the researcher” (Wilson, 2007, p. 194). What makes the research Indigenist is that the researcher engages in a good way, respecting relationships throughout the research and beyond. Examples of this kind of engagement can be found throughout the findings of this study. They support a conclusion that the participants in this study have an understanding of Indigenous epistemologies and how to implement this understanding through their research processes and methodologies. As a result, they are able to work together with Indigenous peoples in ways that are significantly different than early researcher-directed methodologies that so often caused damage to Indigenous communities. The ethics of doing research with Indigenous peoples has changed and while participants support the research ethic, ‘do no harm’, they extend it to include leaving the community in better shape as a result of the research experience. What follows is a description of where the literature and the findings come together to support and extend the knowledge we have about how to engage as respectful research partners with Indigenous peoples so that we do no harm and we leave the community better off.

### **Findings that support the literature**

Several topics that emerged from the literature I reviewed were reflected in the participants’ stories. For example, the literature I reviewed revealed several characteristics that non-Indigenous researchers who have sustained partnerships in research with Indigenous people might have; these include: responsibility, trust, respect, and humility. The literature also included reference to the values inherent in researchers who work in Indigenous contexts: worldview, respect, responsibility, reciprocity and relational accountability. In addition, the following knowledge and skills emerged as

significant in the literature: collective knowledge, understanding of the negative effects of research that has been conducted in Indigenous contexts, self-identity, relationship-building, and the cultural safety model.

According to several scholars (Menzies, 2004; Smith, 1999; Weber-Pillwax, 2001; Wilson, 2001), trust and responsibility are fundamental characteristics that a researcher must have in order to work respectfully with Indigenous peoples. Participants in this study shared many examples of how they uphold trust and understand the responsibility they have as non-Indigenous researchers; for example, “there’s a certain layer, when working with Indigenous peoples because of the relationship with colonization, and my particular responsibility as a settler so responsibility comes with that in my relationship with Indigenous peoples” (Brown, p. 12). Although the characteristics of sensitivity and humility are documented to some degree in the literature, this study’s participants feel that they are critical to their ability to research sustainably with Indigenous peoples.

Participants hold relational accountability (Wilson, 2001) as a value and they engage in it through the ways that they enter a community and establish trust. According to Menzies (2004) and Weber-Pillwax (2001), trust is an integral part of the respectful relationship building necessary for research partnerships to exist. According to Castellano (2004), researchers need many things in order to gain trust and develop relationships including an understanding that Indigenous communities have long-established traditions, protocols, and ceremonies, for example, participants demonstrate respect and understanding by participating in community events when invited.

The literature and the participants were clear that researchers need to have specific knowledge and skills in order to work respectfully with Indigenous peoples. One thing they need is a clear understanding of their own identity (Kvale, 1996 in Lather, 2006; O'Connor, 2008). While this study's findings support the concept of self-knowledge, participants also identified the need to be clear about why they want to engage in this kind of research and to know their role as a researcher in the community. Not overstepping the boundaries of that role is important too. Being sensitive and humble, participants consider their role carefully.

Also important in relationship-building and maintenance, reciprocity is a key concept in Indigenous epistemologies and in an Indigenist research paradigm (Wilson, 2007; Castellano, 2004; Bishop 2003). The findings of this study indicate that participants understand and demonstrate reciprocity in many ways. Although the literature does not include a categorical analysis of the kinds of things that could be considered as reciprocity, I offer the following as a consideration. The ways that participants described their engagement in reciprocity can be divided into tangible and intangible as well as related to the research project or not. For example, one participant felt that it is always important to leave a tangible benefit in the community after a research project ends while another participant included activities such as babysitting and writing proposals for other unrelated projects as an act of reciprocity. The findings produced many examples of reciprocity which support and enhance the information on the topic that is available through the literature and show a range of options for researchers looking for ways to give back to the community.

## **Findings that Add to the Literature**

The findings of this study that add to the literature are tied to the research questions and include: characteristics, values, knowledge, skills, and formative experiences.

### **Characteristics**

Findings of this study reveal two characteristics that are not well-documented in the literature but are important to this study's participants. The first is withholding judgment, showing "...a little bit of holding back...just [being] slow to judge and slow to come to conclusions" (Ball, p. 28) about what you experience in another culture. Overall, participants did not think it was appropriate for them to judge what they saw in a community and they did not feel that it was their role to change the community if the people did not want to change. The second characteristic is flexibility. Participants shared stories of how they demonstrated flexibility through being prepared for anything that may come up. A community member told one of the participant, "you should be prepared to do whatever, you should be prepared for whatever might happen...you should be prepared to be ready to step in" (Saxon, p. 13) and help where needed in the community. Another way to show that you have flexibility as a researcher is when you are sensitive to the needs of the community. You must be willing "to accept that what you may even know is right might not work in the context you're in" (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 11). The concept of timing is important; "it's not that they're bad questions or they shouldn't be asked sometime but this is not the time" (Ball, p. 35). By withholding judgment and demonstrating flexibility, participants demonstrate an awareness of their role as researchers and respect for their relationships in the community.

**Values**

A value associated with researchers working in Indigenous contexts that was not part of the literature that I reviewed but was revealed through the interviews is self-care. Researching in Indigenous contexts can be challenging work on an emotional level so it is important to consider ways to take care of oneself as a researcher. Participants spoke about the ways that they take care themselves and in some cases their colleagues and participants in the research project as well. Examples of self care include brushing-offs and other kinds of ceremonies, and creating a plan to care for your spirit as you work through a research project. “So there’s the plan for how you’re going to collect your data and how are you going to take care of your spirit and yourself” (Brown, 21). Having a plan for how you’re going to take care of yourself, especially as a non-Indigenous researcher, can help you engage in the research project in a good way that honours and respects the community with whom you are working.

**Knowledge**

Although it is not discussed in the literature I reviewed, during discussions about the researcher’s role, several participants spoke about the importance of the concept of space; making space and taking space as a type of knowledge that they find helps them in their work in Indigenous contexts. Participants talked about making space by creating positions within the research team that would allow for greater involvement from and capacity building within the community. Questions of making and taking space arose as well. One participant wondered, “...how do you take some space and through that make some space for others and then get out of the way? ...learn to get out of the way.”

(Brown, p. 8). When researchers learn to get out of the way, they are behaving as an ally with Indigenous people in the research process.

Although not clearly outlined in the literature, participants identified that politics plays a role in their understanding of the community and in their perception of their role as a researcher. One participant simply stated that times have changed since they first began researching in an Indigenous community and now, unlike the past, a researcher should be sure to introduce themselves to the political leaders in the community. It's unclear that this is a protocol but it does seem to be an expected procedure. Some researchers see research as a political tool for social justice that can help them "...be part of the solution and...help others to use [research] on their decolonizing journey" (Brown, p. 3). However politics are viewed, participants acknowledged that researchers should be aware that politics have a role to play in doing research in Indigenous communities.

Another area that is not well-developed in the literature is competency in the area in which you are researching. Many participants have been approached to do research in Indigenous contexts because of the expertise they have in a given subject area; the community knows that the researcher has a reputation of being competent. Participants also noted that researchers need to be competent in the social context of the community. It's not enough to have one or the other; researchers need to be competent in their subject area and have the skills to function respectfully in social situations so that they can respectfully engage with community members and maintain relationships.

## Skills

The main skill that was referenced in the literature was relationship-building. The findings support the development of this skill and add several other hard and soft skills to the literature. Soft skills include: listening, suppressing your ego, connecting with people in order to build relationships, and divesting power and hard skills include: competency in the research process, and data stewardship.

Although being a good listener was present to a small degree in the literature, participants in this study spoke about the value of listening and furthered the idea by stating that while researchers are taught to ask good questions, they are often not taught how to listen and really hear the responses that are given to the questions they ask. One participant suggests that as a researcher you should "...put yourself in positions where you can just listen and not talk" (Brown, p. 25).

A concept that is connected to listening and is absent from the literature I reviewed but is a finding of this study is 'suppressing your ego.' The concept arose from the data as a way to build and maintain a relationship. "...It's not insisting on what is mine in this as the researcher but being open to sharing, to negotiation, to listening, especially to listening, and to suppress their self-interest" (Czaykowska-Higgins, p. 8). By suppressing her ego, the researcher shows that she values the partnership she has with the community.

Another concept that is not part of the literature I reviewed is divesting power. Being sensitive to the potential inequality that might exist between a researcher and the community, participants in this study noted ways to overcome this potential inequity by divesting power whenever possible. By sharing as many roles in the research project as

possible with community members, a researcher can become closer to the community “you’ll never be one of the people, but if you have all the power and all the pieces...then that’s a [problematic] place to work from” (Pence, p. 14).

Learning how to connect with people is important and it’s different doing it in an Indigenous context. A researcher can do this by introducing herself in a way that allows community members to make connections to her. For example, she may refer to other people she knows who have connections to the community. As one participant notes, “there is that need to situate people [in the community] and not with reference to their university” (Ball, p. 16). By respecting and engaging in the ways that many Indigenous peoples make connections a researcher is developing relationships that honour the traditions, protocols, and procedures of the Indigenous community.

Although the literature I reviewed refers to methods and methodologies associated with research in Indigenous contexts, it is not explicit about the need for researchers to demonstrate competency in the research process. Participants in this study identified several ways that they do this. One participant believes that being a generalist enables her to be more responsive than she could be if she were tied to a specialty. Another participant describes her application of a respectful research ethic when she declines an invitation to be involved in research with an Indigenous community. If a researcher cannot “be genuine and authentic...and enter [the research] properly, [they’re] not ready, the timing’s not right” (Brown, p. 22). The concept of having an exit plan was broached by one participant who has seen researchers/consultants who he feels “have good relations [in the community] but...they’ve taken on too much for too long. They don’t have an exit plan and that’s problematic. I think that anybody coming in from outside

should have an exit plan...” (Pence, p. 17). Being responsive to the community’s research needs and knowing when to engage and when not to is an important part of demonstrating competency in the research process.

Although absent from the literature I reviewed, participants referred to specific techniques and methods they use to build relationships through the research process including data stewardship. According to one participant “...research is about data so having...data stewardship agreements...that’s one key thing” (Ball, p. 22). One way to establish understandings about data stewardship is to create a memorandum of understanding (MOU) or a memorandum of agreement (MOA). Although these agreements are important for data stewardship purposes, the process of creating them together with the community can be make them tools for establishing relationships and the document that has been co-created can be used in the maintenance of the relationship between the researcher and the community.

Although there are many recommendations about what researchers should know before engaging in research with Indigenous peoples, one participant reminds us, ...that there isn’t a recipe. We’ve got the four R’s, we’ve got [Ownership, Control, Access and Possession], it all sounds like lots of recipes; you just follow these recipes but...we’ve learned that [Indigenous peoples] are so incredibly diverse from one individual to the next, one community to the next. There isn’t one way to approach research or one way of doing and it will always change over time. (Ball, p. 35)

**Formative experiences**

Prior life experiences impacted the participants' choice and ability to engage in research with Indigenous peoples. Participants shared stories of the personal, cultural, educational and professional experiences and discussed the impact they had on their research careers.

Since none of the participants reported having had significant connection to or relationships with and Indigenous person or peoples while they were growing up, it's possible to conclude that having these kinds of relationships may not be a factor that contributed to the participant's ability to engage in research with Indigenous peoples. What some participants did have as influences in their early lives were family situations that predisposed them towards social justice, equality, and/or diversity. Some participants lived in liberal, anti-racist, or immigrant families where there was an understanding of difference and others came from communities that may have been less accepting of difference, in which case, the participant grew to recognize this and rebelled against it.

Overseas travel where participants experienced the feeling of being the Other also played a role in how and why they have chosen to engage in research with Indigenous peoples. Participants indicated that as a result of the awareness of being the Other, they developed an understanding of diversity and the many ways in which to see the world as well as a belief that there are many ways that outcomes can be achieved. This ontological shift was a significant factor in their personal and professional development and it provided a foundation on which they were able to base their ability to engage in respectful research with Indigenous peoples.

Participants spoke about the impact that their formal and informal education opportunities have had on them as researchers. Although most stories connected more with informal learning experiences, some participants talked about their formal education as influential. Working as undergraduate or graduate field-based research assistant and engaging in their own MA/PhD research were the most common form of formal education. Some participants also credited their professional background outside the academy as a strong influence on their decision and ability to engage in research in Indigenous communities. Through the type of work they were doing, they had exposure to and experience with Indigenous peoples in contexts other than research, typically through the social service professions. However, participants shared that the majority of their learning came as a result of doing research; learning from the communities, learning from observation, and learning from their successes and mistakes. In addition, one participant said that she'd received strong mentoring from her personal community which, as a result of having an Indigenous partner, included advice from him, Indigenous family members, friends and community members. Although participants have had a multitude of different life experiences, a common thread running through their stories is an understanding of diversity, a willingness to try to see through another's eyes and a genuine desire to support others to create and walk their own path.

### **Reflecting on the Process**

As a research method, narrative inquiry includes many components that parallel Indigenous epistemologies and decolonizing methodologies. Having this congruency allowed me to reveal the participants' experiences and to do so in a way that honoured and was consistent with the very epistemologies and methodologies I was investigating.

Examples of this congruency include the following. Participants were asked to share their stories of being non-Indigenous researchers working in Indigenous contexts and as we talked I too shared my stories. Together, our mutual storytelling and “restorying” (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 4) encouraged both of us to learn from each others’ experiences and to come to a collective understanding about a topic. In this process, each participant and I began to develop a relationship. Out of respect, trust and a desire to engage in relational accountability, each one of these relationships was enhanced as the participants were given the opportunity to review and alter both their transcripts and a draft copy of my thesis document that includes their stories.

Overall, I believe the interviews went well however, being a new researcher, I discovered that I have a lot to learn about using the narrative inquiry method so that it is as congruent with Indigenous epistemologies as possible. For instance, I believe it would have been beneficial to participants if I had provided more information about narrative inquiry, how it can be connected to Indigenous epistemologies, and the way I planned to use the method. Providing this kind of context, prior to beginning the interview, might have better supported participants to engage in more natural, flowing storytelling. Having more than one session with each participant might have resulted in deeper reflection which could have enhanced individual and collective learning and understanding. Finally, had participants been able to engage in a group interview(s), learning might have occurred in different ways and at deeper levels.

## **Implications**

There are several possibilities for future research as a result of this study. Extending this work to include a follow-up research project with the communities that

have been research partners with this study's participants would do three things: first, it would give Indigenous communities a chance to voice their opinions and share their experiences as research partners with University of Victoria researchers. Second, it could mitigate concerns about the reliability of participants' memories by allowing community members' stories to complement participants' stories. And third, the results of the study would add to the theoretical and practical knowledge we have about doing research with Indigenous peoples in respectful ways.

A further suggestion for research is a replication of this study at another Canadian university or at the national or international level. A study of this nature would allow for knowledge sharing among academic institutions. University of Victoria faculty and students could learn from the experiences of researchers in other universities and University of Victoria faculty could potentially take the lead and share their experiences as research partners with Indigenous communities with academics in other institutions.

Finally, it may be possible to further investigate the topic of this research study through the use of a research method that aligns even more closely with Indigenous epistemologies and decolonizing methodologies than narrative inquiry. Perhaps a cooperative or collaborative inquiry project could be considered. The collective, ongoing nature of a cooperative inquiry allows for participants to interact with each other in a group setting where knowledge can be shared directly among group members, research questions can be generated together, and conclusions can be drawn collectively. An approach that encompasses all of these things is one that is most consistent with Indigenous epistemologies and decolonizing methodologies.

The outcomes of this research indicate that non-Indigenous researchers who work in partnership with Indigenous communities prepare themselves to do this work in different ways. They appreciate the opportunity to discuss the ways in which they engage in Indigenous research and they believe that University of Victoria has an opportunity to further its support of researchers and the community and enhance its reputation as a leader in recognizing, valuing and prioritizing Indigenous education and research in a number of ways. These include:

1. Implementing enhanced preparation of non-Indigenous student researchers and faculty members who wish to engage in research with Indigenous peoples through coursework, mentorship, and accompaniment opportunities.
2. Providing a forum for researchers to engage in self-reflective activities as individuals, disciplines, and as researchers who are involved in working with Indigenous communities.
3. Encouraging, supporting and valuing the work of a researcher who writes about their experience as a non-Indigenous researcher working in Indigenous contexts in addition to their writing about the content of the research.

Engaging in these kinds of activities could enhance the research experience for faculty, students and the community.

Although many respectful research partnerships exist, there may be ways to augment and extend the ways in which researchers prepare themselves for engaging in good research partnerships with Indigenous peoples. One way may be through Fleras' cultural safety model. Fleras developed the cultural safety model for non-Maori researchers / service providers based on Irwin's culturally safe concept for mainstream

nursing (1994). The cultural safety model allows for the bridging between methodologies and leads to the concept of squared articulation where “each investigator must reflexively step back and look at their own culture...see how their culture is seen by other cultures...see how others cultures see themselves; and examine how they see other cultures” (Fleras, 2004, p. 126). Investigating how these researchers and others might consider using all components of the concept of squared articulation within the cultural safety model would likely have benefits for students, faculty and the community. Working in tandem with the cultural safety model, researchers could further their knowledge and experience with the concepts and practices of decolonization and being an ally. According to Margaret (2010), an effective way to do this is to create a network or some other opportunity to share learning. These activities could also support Wilson’s (2007) Indigenist research paradigm and further understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

In conclusion, good researchers doing good work in a good way is an important goal for everyone involved: researchers, students, the academy, and the community. Given the history of Indigenous research, preparing to do this good work in Indigenous contexts is an important part of the research process, especially for non-Indigenous researchers. It is important that researchers realize this and make preparing themselves a priority.

I think we have to say, if we’re comfortable in our own skins, that we’re good people, that we have good motivation, and we’re willing to learn and have people divert us and tell us perhaps it isn’t what we think it is...I think that’s the openness we need...then we can do good work. (Lutz, p. 20)

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## Appendix A Recruitment Email



Curriculum and Instruction  
University of Victoria  
Faculty of Education

### *Participant Invitation*

Dear, XXXXXXXXXXXX,

I would like to invite you to participate in a study entitled **Education and Experience in the Preparation of**

**Non-Indigenous Researchers in Indigenous Contexts Study** that is being conducted by myself, Alison Brophay [abrophay@uvic.ca](mailto:abrophay@uvic.ca). I am a graduate student in the department of Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Victoria. As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a MA degree in Curriculum and Instruction. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Helen Raptis [hraptis@uvic.ca](mailto:hraptis@uvic.ca).

The purpose of the study is to understand the preparation and experiences of a select group of non-Indigenous researchers at the University of Victoria who have respectfully worked with and for Indigenous communities. Further, I plan to recommend ways in which non-Indigenous researchers could be prepared to conduct research in Indigenous contexts. In order to understand the preparation and experiences non-Indigenous researchers require to be effective partners in research with and for Indigenous communities, I plan to consider the following questions: What characterizes non-Indigenous allies who have researched sustainably in partnership with Indigenous communities? What knowledge, skills, and values do non-Indigenous researchers find important in researching with Indigenous communities? What experiences (cultural, personal, and educational) do non-Indigenous researchers consider to have shaped their abilities to research with Indigenous communities?

Research of this type is important due to the paucity of research on researcher preparedness for non-Indigenous researchers working in Indigenous contexts. Now, more than ever, there is acknowledgement on behalf of the academy and research funding organizations, of ways of knowing that are different than those that have traditionally dominated the university environment. Perhaps as a result of this research, new ways of thinking about and developing knowledge transfer and mobilization opportunities that will benefit the Indigenous communities and partnering institutions will emerge.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a faculty member from the University of Victoria who has engaged sustainably in research partnership with and/or for

Indigenous peoples. It is your preparedness and experience as a researcher in this context that is of interest to me.

If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include an individual interview which will be about 1.5 hours either at my office or a location of your choice. Audio-tapes and-written notes will be taken and a transcription will be made for data analysis purposes. A sample question: tell me how the relationship you have with an Indigenous community has developed. I will ask you to review your transcript after the interview.

Participants will benefit from thinking and reflecting on their own learning and preparedness for engaging in research partnership with Indigenous communities; this may assist you in your professional growth. There are broader benefits to the university community and Indigenous communities through the potential development of a rationale for recommending ways in which non-Indigenous researchers could be prepared to conduct research respectfully in partnership in Indigenous contexts. There are strong potential benefits to the field of education as we learn more about the ways in which non-Indigenous educators prepare themselves to engage respectfully with Indigenous peoples.

Thank you for considering this invitation. Please let me know if you would like to participate in this study by replying to this e-mail message. You can also contact me and/or my supervisor at the addresses or telephone numbers below.

Sincerely,

Alison Brophey, Researcher  
250.721.7860

[abrophey@uvic.ca](mailto:abrophey@uvic.ca)

Dr. Helen Raptis, Supervisor  
250.721.7776

[hraptis@uvic.ca](mailto:hraptis@uvic.ca)

## Appendix B

### Interview Questions

I'm using narrative inquiry as a research method and my interviews will be relatively unstructured so that space is opened up for participants to tell their story. Below is a list of the themes and questions I will keep in mind to help me guide the discussion I have with participants:

- Tell me a bit about yourself and the research you've done with Indigenous people or in Indigenous communities.
- How have/would your colleagues, students, community members describe you as a person and as a researcher?
- How did you get involved in working with/for Indigenous people/communities?
  - Have you always conducted research in connection with Indigenous communities?
  - If not, when did you start? What drew you to this kind of work?
  - Why have you continued?
  - Research shows that trust is important in developing and maintaining research relationships. Could you describe how you have built and maintained trust within communities?
- Where/how have you learned to work with Indigenous peoples in the context of research?
  - Did you take a course, workshop, read, learn from colleagues, learn from community members?
- Are there things that you have done/do to prepare yourself to engage in research with Indigenous communities that are different than the things you do to prepare to do research in other contexts?
- I'm curious about your research process; could you describe the process you follow in planning for and conducting research? (i.e. following community protocols)
  - How have your projects gotten started and moved through the stages of a research project?
  - Did you approach a community? Did they approach you?
  - Were you working in partnership and if so, how would you describe this relationship?

- Reciprocity is a theme I noted in the literature. Could you give me an example of how you have demonstrated this in your work with Indigenous communities?
- Could you tell me about the times when you have experienced “success” in your work within Indigenous contexts?
  - How did you (and your research partners and participants) describe success? How did you know things were working well?
- Could you tell me about the times when you have experienced challenges/struggles in your work within Indigenous contexts?
  - How did you know things weren't working well?
  - What did you learn?
  - Did you change how you think about research and how have you altered your research practice as a result?
- According to the research, it is important to establish and maintain respectful relationships with Indigenous communities. Could you give me an example of how you have done this?
- Researcher, Augie Fleras, describes a cultural safety model for non-Maori researchers working in Maori communities. In this model, she suggests that researcher must do two things: first, they have to learn to be culturally self-aware so that they become more sensitive to the potential negative effects of the unintended imposition of their cultural beliefs, values and norms on the participants. Second, they have to learn about the cultural, historical and structural circumstances of the recipients. Could you give me an example of how you have engaged in these kinds of preparation methods?
- Some Indigenous people talk about walking in two worlds or walking with a foot in each.
  - Would you use a similar analogy to describe how you work within the academy and in Indigenous communities?
  - How would you describe your worldview?
  - How has your way of understanding the world supported and/or challenged your work with Indigenous communities?
- If you were asked to give advice to new researchers going into an Indigenous community to conduct research, what would you say to help them prepare to do this work?
- Are there questions you thought I was going to ask you?
- Is there anything else you would like to share with me?