

Coming Home: Weaving Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh Identity and Belonging
In the Creation of a Story Blanket

By

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Abstract

This project offers insights into my journey of reconnecting with my late mother's Indigenous Skwxwú7mesh community. Through connecting with cousins, aunts, and uncles, I experienced a diverse and extended kinship network, guided by rich teachings, art, storytelling, and ceremonies. This provided a foundation for my art-based project that guided my research in understanding the value in Indigenous ways of knowing that are experienced through holistic, interconnected and fluid practice. I have utilized the art of storytelling to create a story blanket that documents my journey and reconnection to my Skwxwú7mesh roots. Combined with an audio and slideshow presentation, each blanket panel tells the story of my journey of reconnection through questions, understanding, connection, belonging, and commitments to practice. The story blanket is composed of 12 story panels made of felt, wool, buttons and thread and arranged in a linear format that documents my journey of understanding through an autoethnography approach of piecing, stitching and steeping the multilayered intersections that shape my identity as a mixed-race person, with an emphasis on my coming into my Indigeneity. In contrast to Western research paradigms of appropriation, the foundations of my research methods and ethics are rooted in Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The story blanket highlights the need for a sense of belonging to community and how community and kinship cement the foundation of Indigenous identity. Colonization has displaced many Skwxwú7mesh community members from their traditional lands and kinship systems. Finding and belonging to these systems provides a sense of self-worth and acceptance, reestablishing the diverse kinship networks within communities that foster a sense of belonging, healing, and connection.

Acknowledgements

I want to start by raising my hands to the many people who have contributed to my sense of self, learning, and understanding of my Indigenous roots. I did not achieve my current position on my own. I am fully aware that I have walked alongside, observed, and received gifts offered by others who were willing to share them with me. I have gathered and cultivated my own set of values, teachings, and identity, which have shaped and formed the person I am today.

I want to thank my biggest supporters and guiding angels, my late parents, Bill and Linda Houghton. My parents always showed their children unconditional love and provided them with guidance and support. They offered me different teachings, perspectives, and skills, which I added to my cedar basket of gathering, setting the foundation of how I practice and navigate the world around me. They were pillars that have laid the foundation for my sense of belonging to family, place, and community.

My son, Adrian. My soul connection. He has completely shifted my understanding of myself and how I navigate this world. I entered post-secondary education because of him. I wanted more for my life. I wanted to believe I was worthy of more because I knew his eyes were on me, and my actions in life would impact him. He opened my eyes to the joys of healing, self-acceptance, and fatherhood. I wanted to be a good role model for him. I wanted him to believe in himself and know that he could achieve anything his heart and dreams desired. He has humbled me, grounded me, and reminded me every day that I always belong to him as his dad.

I want to express my gratitude and love to my siblings. My late parents gave us a foundation of loyalty, respect, and love. These foundational attributes are what my brothers and sisters have shown me along my journey. Each sibling has allowed me to pursue and nurture my journey of healing, knowledge acquisition, and growth as an Indigenous mixed-race person. My

siblings and I have sent both our parents off on their final journey, and this taught us to lean on one another more than ever. They have lifted me in both challenging and positive moments in my life, and for this, I thank them for allowing me to pull strength from them to bring to my work.

My extended family truly lifted me in my darkest times. With the loss of my late mother, the Matriarchs from my mom's family welcomed and embraced us with open arms as we re-entered our Sḵw̱x̱wú7mesh community. They took on that second mother role, as this is a valued teaching that runs in our community. They rallied around me with the loss of my father to make sure I knew that we always had family by our side. My aunties, uncles, cousins, nieces, and nephews have shown me a new understanding of support and love that we didn't quite experience from our settler roots.

My Sḵw̱x̱wú7mesh community has witnessed, listened to, and experienced my growth and skills learned in post-secondary education. Elders I have spoken with have shared, get your education and bring it back to our community. Don't covet or hoard your education. Appreciate the gift the Creator has bestowed upon you. Walk gently and show humility in your work. You are here because of your ancestors.

My uncle Sempúyan, my community and elder advisor. He loves unconditionally and cares tremendously for the people of the Sḵw̱x̱wú7mesh community. He has worked tirelessly in many capacities to provide love, respect and dignity amongst our people. He always has kind words to say and holds great teachings of our Sḵw̱x̱wú7mesh ways. It was important for me to ask him to guide my research and project, as he was instrumental in my acceptance in our community and helped to bring my research full circle.

My supervisor, Dr. Sandrina Carere, and committee member, Prof. Shanne McCafferty, are instrumental women in my life. My journey to the University of Victoria has offered me a tremendous gift in connecting me with strong Indigenous warrior women. Sandrina and Shanne have allowed me to delve deeply into my sense of self and explore the avenues of identity that have shaped the Indigenous person I am today. They offered moments of self-reflection and visibility and pushed me to strengthen my Indigenous voice. I am highly honoured to have these strong women guide my graduate journey to its completion. The knowledge I have learned, gained, and implemented into my daily life is grounded by the relationships we have built during my educational career. I will cherish these experiences and moments shared with them.

Finally, myself. The older I got, the more disconnected from life I felt. I couldn't accept parts of myself because I never thought I was allowed to explore them. My journey has been full of ups and downs, but it has led me to this moment.

These are my words.

All My Relations. U'siyam.

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Chapter 1. Introduction and Literature Review

Self-Location

Hal7th Skawyel Ta Nuyup, Joshua Kwi en sna. Hello to everyone, my name is Joshua, I would like to acknowledge that I write these words and close my research on the traditional lands of my Indigenous community of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish People). My work is rooted in decolonial ethics, and I do this work with great gratitude, working within my community situated in modern-day North Vancouver.

My late mother was from the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw. She was a survivor of both Residential School and Indian day school and experienced overt racism growing up outside of her community. She married my father (of English/Scottish descent) and moved to a predominantly white community in hopes of giving their children better opportunities. Being raised away from my Indigenous community and in predominantly white spaces set the foundation for my identity and ethics in my childhood, which progressed into my adulthood. Growing up in spaces where I didn't feel seen left a profound feeling of not being worthy or valued as a person. As Webstad discusses in her interview with CBC Radio about her experiences at residential school (Weikle & Deerchild, 2023), not knowing who you are can play a huge role in how you navigate the world.

It wasn't until I moved to my late mother's Indigenous community that I became aware of and acknowledged my biases, privileges, and internalized discrimination towards Indigenous people. I had to identify, unpack and undo decades of discrimination and internalized racism. The more I connected with my extended family members and attended community events, the more I observed a rich and diverse new perspective. Learning about matriarchal systems, identity and understanding where I come from was important to my sense of self. These stories and

experiences also strengthen the heartbeat of the community (Johnston, 2016). Now being more spiritual than religious, I am seeking a stronger foundation for my Indigenous self; this is a process, and it's ongoing. My current beliefs and ethics are shaped by my family, culture, and education, including my connections with Indigenous researchers, professors, and knowledge holders, as well as my personal experiences. As a multi-racial person of English, Scottish, Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, Hawaiian, and Chilean descent, I employ a two-eyed seeing approach that allows both Indigenous and Western worldviews to come together in collective harmony. I rely on the strengths of both approaches when gathering research (Wright et al., 2019). I view two-eyed seeing as a way to bridge multiple ways of being, knowing, and bringing forward meaningful Indigenous-led research (Reiger et al., 2021). Two-eyed seeing acknowledges Indigenous methodologies as parallel to Western approaches, which have historically been positioned as superior in academia (Findlay, 2023). The framework honours Indigenous worldviews and gives equal recognition to the contributions of our community narratives in doing research with and for Indigenous people and communities (Martin, 2012).

As I move forward with presenting my research in this document, I first delve into the context and rationale for my project. I then review current scholarship that complements and guides my research. My review of literature directed me toward a position that aided in strengthening my perspective as an Indigenous researcher seeking to dismantle colonial structures, while also exploring my community identity as a Skwxwú7mesh person.

Context and Rationale

The impacts of colonization on Indigenous people and communities have created critical and ongoing challenges that have affected generations of familial systems (Wickham, 2010). These harms have produced cultural distortions and the systemic separation of vast kinship

networks within Indigenous communities (Findlay, 2023). Findlay discusses her research on colonial cultural distortions, such as the community haves/have-nots and insider/outsider paradigms. These hierarchies are byproducts of colonialism: colonial systems and policies created haves and have-nots in Indigenous communities. They produced the separation of families and kinship networks while implementing colonial systems that divide Indigenous communities as an assimilatory practice (Findlay, 2023). Colonial power hierarchies continue to disrupt community identity and cultural connections. The displacement of people from their traditional and ancestral lands is an ongoing barrier to cultural identity. Thus, my research focuses on the critical importance of community identity for displaced and disconnected Indigenous peoples, as this resonates with my personal journey. Specifically, my research builds on my re-introduction to the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw community and my journey in seeking a sense of belonging. I also draw connections to how community, in various aspects from birth to where I stand today, has played a significant role in identifying, shaping, and filling in the missing pieces of who I am as an Indigenous mixed-race person. Some overarching questions I asked myself during my research process included: What does community identity mean to me? How has colonization impacted the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw kinship networks? How do we welcome back displaced and disconnected community members? What cultural values, oral histories and traditional teachings do I want to pass on to future generations?

Working with these questions, over a period of ten months I created a story blanket entirely by hand to document my journey from birth to where I stand today. My story blanket acknowledges the privilege and responsibility I hold in sharing, honouring, educating, and highlighting the importance of identity, a sense of belonging, and equity in embracing the power of Indigenous knowledge systems. My arts-based, blanket-making, storytelling methodology

addresses a gap in research that further explores and contributes to individual lived experience through the lens of community reconnection. While community-based data is helpful, having individual lived experiences at the forefront of storytelling research allows for more visibility and the representation of diverse perspectives. Community is vital to connection, but we, as individuals, experience and perceive the world through our own eyes, and it is critical to also center our individual perspectives (Hart, 2002).

In addition to the support and teachings that my family has provided me throughout my research and my life, I also had the privilege of working with one of my uncles as my project's official community member and Elder advisor. My Uncle, Sempulyan, a council member for the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw, honoured me by accepting my invitation to walk alongside and guide me through the process of understanding the importance of knowing who we are as Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw people. I sat with him and shared my research, and in that connection of reciprocity, he shared stories and teachings about our vast kinship familial systems. I learned from my uncle that understanding who you are as a Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw grounds you to the land and culture, cementing that sense of belonging that our disconnected community members seek.

Connection to Existing Research

The impacts of colonization on Indigenous people and communities are still in full effect. They have produced a generation of people who seek a foundation for completing the missing pieces of their identity. As outlined in St-Denis and Walsh's article (2016), I was a person staring into a mirror, observing a blurred vision of someone I didn't recognize. There was this internalized awakening of wondering what the story was of this person I couldn't quite

acknowledge (St-Denis & Walsh, 2016). This curiosity led me to explore scholarship centred around identity, Indigeneity, and the process of reclaiming my sense of self.

To undertake a review of literature on these topics, I surveyed published and grey literature through the University of Victoria library system, as well as resources I had gathered from my university courses. I identified and summarized themes and connections across resources, while also linking them to my own experiences and my research focus.

The first theme I identified is that research has shown that the ongoing impacts of colonization have created barriers for Indigenous people who seek to reclaim their culture and connection to their communities (Goss et al., 2024). The past and current colonial disruptions directly influence how Indigenous people attempt to reclaim their sovereignty and sense of self. Colonial policies and practices have created cultural distortions and the systemic separation of vast kinship networks in Indigenous communities. Indigenous people can face significant cultural distortions when they re-enter their community (Findlay, 2023). As a result, colonization has created a divide among family systems in Indigenous communities. This divide can make it difficult for people to explore their Indigeneity, as disconnection can foster impostor syndrome (Cabellon, 2021). I connect strongly with this theme of impostor syndrome. As I re-entered my Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw community, I was living between two paradigms: my settler upbringing and my newfound curiosity about exploring my Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw self. In reading Cabellon's article (2021), I was also reminded of the opportunities I was afforded by my academic studies, as these set the stage for my journey in Indigenous studies, and thus, for my journey of reconnection.

St-Denis and Walsh (2016) have explored the process of reclamation of Indigeneity, using an autoethnographic approach. They identified six phases that Indigenous people may

potentially undergo in their reclamation process: Awakening, exploring, Indigenizing, reclaiming, belonging, and the final stage of the Emerging Warrior. As an Indigenous person who has experienced most of these phases, I understand the disconnect that Indigenous people experience when they cannot relate to their Indigenous selves and people. My lived experience of not growing up in my Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh community has had a critical impact on my identity as a Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh and Indigenous person. Disconnection affects who you are as a person, right down to the core of your sense of self. I felt disconnected not only from my community but from the world around me. There was this emptiness in my core that I needed to discover and explore. What I found most helpful is that St-Denis and Walsh (2016) speak of the phases of Indigenous identity development as an opportunity for positive growth and discovery, not just loss and pain. I have embraced this scholarship of discovery and knowledge building, which involves one's ability to work through questions, engage in education, foster connection, cultivate awareness, and participate to achieve their intended outcomes. I am now in the final stage of the Emerging Warrior phase, and with this project and supporting document, I will bring my journey and research full circle.

Another overarching theme of my research that was echoed in the literature is the importance of acknowledging the vast and diverse traditional governance and knowledge systems of Indigenous nations, including my own (Beveridge et al., 2021). These systems have been maintained for millennia despite colonial insertion that tried to erase the epistemologies and relational ways of knowing and being that sustained community spaces and histories (Beveridge et al., 2021). My review of the literature showed that Indigenous research is often overlooked, misunderstood, or relegated to a category that is skimmed over in a weekly lesson in post-secondary education, rather than being the focus of learning. I also found that Indigenous

research and approaches were often identified as “grey literature,” an area of research that is not governed or regulated by an academic peer-reviewed publisher (Paez, 2018). Dr. Denise Findlay, a member of the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw, suggests that Western scientific approaches continue to carry more weight in determining the efficacy of research outcomes, as compared to Indigenous knowledge and cultural practices. I had the opportunity to engage with Dr. Findlay about her work, and she mentioned that there still is a strong divide in current research, institutions, and academia that continues to deny and minimize Indigenous ways of being, Indigenous voices, and the vast existence of Indigenous knowledge (Findlay, 2023). This shows that Western research remains oppressive when researchers and educators fail to fully decolonize their work (Datta, 2017).

In contrast to Western approaches, I also reviewed Indigenous studies that used both published and grey literature to benefit our communities. Used in this way, grey research can balance and bring a diverse perspective to published evidence, and aid in promoting research equity. It is important for Indigenous research to uphold a respectful and relational approach. As taught by Cree researcher Sean Wilson, research is considered a ceremony in Indigenous methodologies because it is not simply a process of gathering data, but a relational, ethical, and spiritual practice that acknowledges the interconnectedness of all beings (Wilson, 2008). I hope that in the future, there will not be a gap in how we bring various forms of research together to gain diverse perspectives and promote better outcomes for and by Indigenous people.

Another issue I identified in my review of Indigenous research is the importance of Indigenous methodologies, especially storytelling (Findlay, 2023). Oral storytelling can serve as a form of resistance to colonization and a resurgence of Indigenous knowledge that Indigenous people have fought to maintain despite the assimilatory actions of colonization (Sium & Ritske,

2013). Telling oral histories through art forms of storytelling is a form of decolonization in action. Storytelling can play two roles: It can be a form of resurgence (Sium & Ritske, 2013) in that it aids in acknowledging the effort, energy, and strengths Indigenous people have exerted to hold onto their ways of being. But it can also support insurgence (Sium & Ritske, 2013), as in our current time, Indigenous people are taking back implementation of decolonization in the pushback against Western academia and institutions that continue to misuse political ideology for colonial agendas. Indigenous people are reclaiming decolonized approaches and implementing them in their proper forms. Oral teachings, histories, and knowledge gained through Indigenous research methods are vessels that carry other ways of knowing to the forefront of decolonial work, dismantling power discourse and disparities that continue to be a barrier to Western theory (Rieger et al., 2020).

Another gap I identified in community-based research is the lack of visibility and representation of people who live within the community. When examining current community-engaged approaches, Findlay noted in her article "Gathering Our Medicine" that Indigenous community models challenge colonial perspectives that prioritize scientism and Western theory, instead elevating and acknowledging Indigenous traditional knowledge systems (2023).

According to Findlay, Western approaches to community-based models can be linear or binary in their delivery, implementation, and outcomes. In contrast, Indigenous ways of knowing, epistemology, and understanding of knowing tend to be more holistic, interconnected, fluid, and circular in theory (Beveridge et al., 2021). Learning from Indigenous researchers like Findlay, I employed a community-based engagement model that prioritizes community teachings, as we are the experts of our own knowledge and family stories (Findlay, 2023). For this reason, oral

storytelling formed the basis of my Indigenous research method, recognizing that storytelling is at the heart of Indigenous cultures (Lilomaiva-Doktor, 2020).

As I was conducting searches for firsthand experiences or voices from individuals on re-entering communities from which they had been removed or displaced, I did not find as many resources as I had hoped or expected. I found much research on displaced communities affected by climate change, socioeconomic and political survivor stories related to residential institutions, Indian day schools, the '60s Scoop, and child welfare, as well as the impacts they endured due to colonization. While there is a wealth of research based on Indigenous communities and perspectives, this research tends to narrow the data or perspectives down to a collective lens, losing the diversity of individuals that make up a community. Further, research from a Western perspective can homogenize Indigenous people into one box. I have found that many community-based studies tend to group community members together and pathologize the community as a whole (Beveridge et al., 2021). It is important to see people as individuals within a collective. Each person within a community has their own lived experience; they see the world differently and are attributed specific gifts from the Creator that reinforce the fabric of the community.

There is a strong and growing body of literature that explores personal reconnection to Indigenous communities, and my story will contribute to this important discussion. With more time and future research, I could delve deeper into this rich body of work. I hope that Indigenous researchers will continue to explore and share new narratives of resilience and resurgence of culture and identity. Such research is at the forefront and shifts away from the typical saviour or problem-focused work that only sees Indigenous people as statistics (Drawson et al., 2017; Wilson, 2008). My goal with this research was to focus on my perspective and create work that

presented an autobiographical journey into my community. I wanted to keep my research focused on myself as a tool and foundation for other Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw members looking for spaces within our communities. Acknowledging and providing spaces for individual stories adds a human quality to the data shared in academic, institutional, and public forums.

Building on my learning from my review of the existing literature, my research focuses on how displaced and disconnected Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw members can re-enter their community to establish a sense of belonging, kinship connection, and community identity, drawing on my journey and experiences. I grounded my project in Indigenous research methods with the creation of a story blanket that instills community identity and connection. Our knowledge systems are often tokenized, romanticized, and, at times, silenced in academic settings. I, myself, have participated in internalized racism as part of my journey, due to the environment I was placed in and some of the values and experiences that I grew up with. This blanket was part of my healing about finding pride in my heritage.

Kinship Rising

My research was conducted in partnership with Kinship Rising¹, a research project at the University of Victoria focused on Indigenous youth wellbeing and resurgence. Kinship Rising is an Indigenous-led, arts-based, community-based research project funded by a SSHRC Insight grant and the Canet Foundation, located on sovereign lək'wəŋən homelands. Working with Indigenous communities across British Columbia, Kinship Rising invites Indigenous young people of all genders to participate in conversations, storytelling, and artmaking, centring dignity, wellbeing, and kinship connections, restoring Indigenous land-body relations, and promoting healing from colonial violence. The Kinship Rising methodology is focused on using

¹ See kinshiprising.uvic.ca

art and storytelling for healing from colonial violence, reconnecting with land, and promoting respectful relations with ourselves and all our relations. Kinship Rising workshops use circles, storytelling, land-based materials such as cedar, hide, and plant medicines, as well as art making such as pictures, painting, storytelling, poetry, blogs, video, crafts, beading, digital media, and much more.

Collaborating with Kinship Rising and Dr. Sandrina Carere has allowed me to connect with and observe strong Indigenous research and resurgence in action. Kinship Rising provided resources, a framework for my research ethics, and support for arts-based graphic design and knowledge dissemination. This partnership has supported me to explore my identity as an Indigenous researcher in greater depth and understand how I situate myself in the world around me. It has enabled me to see diverse Indigenous voices that reinforce my commitment to addressing inequalities in a holistic and accountable way. I have the responsibility to utilize my education and experience to support all marginalized individuals who seek answers to understanding, representation, and equal footing in their environments.

Conclusion

One reason I undertook my research was to gain and share firsthand experiences and stories from an individual perspective. Upon reviewing current research, I found a focus on Indigenous communities as a whole, but a small but changing gap in understanding individual lived experiences, particularly from those who grew up disconnected from their cultures and identities. While community-based data is helpful, placing individual lived experiences at the forefront of research allows for more visibility of diverse perspectives and aids in representation (Hart, 2002). I believe that my approach to incorporating individual experiences within the

community provides a more personal connection for those reviewing my research, thereby bringing a much needed and deeply personal human element to Indigenous research.

Drawing on lessons learned from my review of Indigenous research; I also factored in how I would walk safely while doing this kind of research. This involved checking my biases, given that past and current Indigenous research can be heavily influenced by a solutions- or deficit-based approach that seeks to fix a problem (Drawson et al., 2017; Wilson, 2008). One way for me to do this has been to shift the focus away from problem-centred research and instead focus on the strengths and good work being done within the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw community. I aim to dismantle colonial structures within our Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw community through critical Indigenous, Skwxwú7mesh, and community-based research. As such, my research highlights an understanding of Skwxwú7mesh teachings and places our traditional ways of being at the forefront, documenting them for future generations of Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw people.

Chapter 2. Research Approach and Methodology

In this chapter, I explore my approach to research and methodology. My research focuses on the critical importance of community identity for displaced and disconnected Indigenous peoples, specifically the Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw. I created a story blanket methodology to reflect my ongoing personal journey of seeking and finding connection, as well as navigating the process of reconnection with my Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw community. My story draws connections between how the community, in various aspects from birth to where I stand today, has played a significant role in shaping and filling in the missing pieces of who I am as an Indigenous mixed-race person. My unique story blanket methodology captures an authentic exploration of my Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw identity and how relationships are imperative to creating the communities and kinship networks that shape us as people.

Theoretical and Ethical Frameworks

In this section, I address four theoretical and ethical approaches that informed my research: community-based protocols, art-based research, two-eyed seeing, and autoethnography.

Community-based protocols

My story blanket-making method employed a strength-based and community development model (Findlay, 2023) framework, targeting the Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw. Community-based research frameworks are inclusive, relational, collaborative, and situated in accountability, responsibility, and respect throughout the research process. They follow specific protocols that honour the relationship process (Beveridge et al., 2021). Community-based approaches disrupt the perpetuation of colonizing narratives (Findlay, 2023). Specifically, Indigenous community-based models are dismantling the colonial paradigms that have held

power in research. There is an emergence and insurgence of Indigenous researchers who are shifting the paradigm of what we have seen within the colonial research realm. For these reasons, Indigenous research must be culturally relevant and engaging for participants (Hammond, 2018). Given that my work is conducted within the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw community, it is imperative and critical that I understand the protocols I will follow when sharing my research with the community. Consent is crucial in community-based research to respect and honour participants' sovereignty of stories, teachings, and knowledge (data) being shared. I needed to ensure, when developing my own research, that issues of confidentiality and consent were not overlooked. I guided my work by Kinship Rising's ethical standards and procedures to ensure the complete safety, agency, and autonomy of participants. Indigenous research methods (IRM) are grounded in relationships and relational theory (Chan, 2021). The strengths of IRM within the community context lie in the fact that teachings, moral guidance, and traditional knowledge are embodied in the past, present, and future. For example, many community-based research models incorporate circle theory or talking circles. Talking circles, also known as circle theory, provide a safe and supportive environment, offering people opportunities to explore reciprocal and relational ways of connecting (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2021). Research indicates that talking circles foster mutual respect in social discourse and have been an integral part of Indigenous pedagogies for thousands of years (Barkaskas & Gladwin, 2012).

While I did not use talking circles specifically in my research, my engagement with my family and community was conducted orally, following the same storytelling protocols of respect, relationship, and deep listening. As well, the guidance from my Uncle as community advisor was done in a culturally relevant, oral, and traditional manner. My Uncle mentioned there was no set maximum number of people for engagement in sharing stories, and that it was

more about the reciprocity and connection of the conversations being shared and the respect for the words being shared moving forward. My thoughts on how I share connections and stories with my family still fall under circle protocols in that there is no power or hierarchy within that space being shared; the value among each person is equitable.

Indigenous arts-based research

The foundation of my research centres around an Indigenous art-based framework. Indigenous culture is rooted in artistic and cultural expressions, including storytelling, music, dancing, and traditional weaving techniques that utilize materials such as cedar and wool, among others (Archibald et al., 2019, p. 12). Art, as it pertains to my research, can offer shared similarities that validate one's lived experience and connection to community and self.

While working on my blanket, I attended a presentation by Indigenous youth from the *INVINCIBLE: Our Voices from Care project*, an arts-based storytelling Kinship Rising project created by Indigenous youth in care. The methodology the youth used in their traditional oral storytelling project validated and grounded my research. Methodologies like arts-based storytelling can offer representation, support identity reclamation, honour culture and familial teachings, and create a space for community (INVINCIBLE, 2024). I was especially moved by one Indigenous youth researcher, Jewel Lavin, who shared her journey of identity in her story called "The White Raven". In her story, Lavin (2024) writes:

"I am not an imposter, and I do belong! This is who I am, I am not lost! I am exactly where I'm meant to be. I am still learning and wish to continue learning for the rest of my life. (p.15)".

These words were meant for me to hear as they validated my methodology, my own journey for belonging, and my curiosity for learning. Hearing and reading the stories of each person from the

youth presentation touched my heart in a way that allowed me to release parts of myself I was hiding or afraid to express. They were doing the work of healing, finding and belonging at such an early stage in their lives, which will have a profound effect on generations to come.

Another reason for incorporating art-based methods in the creation of my story blanket is that they bridge the separation between traditional science-based research and the Western paradigm, shifting our perspective on the scholarship of research and the sharing of other ways of knowing (Sium & Ritske, 2013). Given that colonization has impacted knowledge systems within Indigenous communities, art-based methods can disrupt dominant systems of colonial insertion. The basis of colonization was to erase Indigenous identity. In reclaiming and resurgence, Indigenous researchers and practitioners like myself can use art-based methods to show that we are still here and that assimilatory actions imposed on Indigenous people were unsuccessful (Sium & Ritske, 2013).

Two-eyed seeing

One framework I wanted to use as a guiding ethical source was two-eyed seeing; this framework acts as a bridge or connecting point between Western theory and Indigenous knowledge or Indigenous ways of being (Martin, 2012). Two-eyed seeing was conceptualized by Mi'kmaw Elders Albert and Murdena Marshall (Hatcher et al., 2009). Two-eyed seeing offers a balanced, holistic perspective into how we interpret knowledge systems. Western perspectives and Indigenous knowledge are “partial” (Martin, 2012) when viewed in isolation, but when combined through collaboration, they are not complete; yet, they are different, and new knowledge can emerge for both parties. I grounded my research in the framework known as two-eyed seeing, which guided my ethical approach throughout the research process. As a mixed-race researcher of both settler and Indigenous descent, I see the opportunity for both approaches to

come together in honouring and respecting Indigenous knowledge as equal to its Western counterpart. Through my research in the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw community, guided by Indigenous research methods, I do not exclude Western theory; instead, I provide opportunities and representation for the importance of Indigenous worldviews. As an Indigenous researcher with settler roots, I cannot exist without the two worldviews of Indigenous and Western practice.

Autoethnography and storytelling

When I began planning my research project, I recognized that I was building on a foundation of autoethnography and my own storytelling, supplemented by stories gathered from family and community members through sharing connections and teachings within our relationships (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011; Reiger et al., 2020). I needed to share my personal experiences and stories to engage in the process of seeking answers from collective experiences. I wanted to use an autoethnographic approach through storytelling because it allowed me to centre my lived experience as valuable knowledge (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). Storytelling is a decolonial approach I committed myself to, as storytelling plays a critical role within Indigenous methodologies (Archibald, 2008). It acts as a form of resistance, but also as an emergence of strong Indigenous epistemologies that aid in visibility, understanding, and identity (Reiger et al., 2020). Archibald (2008) describes storytelling as an act of “storywork” that connects past and present, teaching through principles such as respect, reciprocity, and holism (pp. 11–12, 143).

I found that storytelling resonated with an ethnographic method called “patchwork ethnography” (Pottinger, 2024). When I looked further into a patchwork approach and connected it to autoethnography, it aligned with my core research principles of highlighting the “researcher” or “individual” in foundational story structures. Using a similar approach to

patchwork ethnography allowed me to shape and guide my research in a progressive approach that kept my story at the forefront of my work (Pottinger, 2024). I see this approach as similar to a storytelling framework, in that it utilizes stages or progressive steps to unfold the research topic. The steps for patchwork ethnography are piecing, stitching and steeping. Gathering experiences or knowledge is the first step of piecing. The initial step of piecing for my blanket design phase involved gathering the important parts of my story that would create the most impact, but also align with the story I wanted to tell. Next, I advanced to the stitching or what I would call the weaving stage, which is the point of research where I envisioned and committed to the design or research direction, allowing me to move forward with delivery. In connection with my blanket, the weaving (stitching) phase was about honouring the experiences I chose to bring to life on my blanket, which tells the story of me and my transformation of my Indigenous self. My process ended in the steeping stage, or what I would refer to as coming into a relationship with the knowledge, to finalize and produce an outcome (Pottinger, 2024). I found the steeping stage to be direct, explicit, tactile, and tangible, and it aligns with the direction of my future work. This phase produced the outcome, which is my story blanket.

I framed my research from an individual lens, but incorporating the experiences of others set the tone of a community-based approach, as it encapsulates decolonial approaches.

Decolonizing my research means holding space for both individual and collective perspectives, centred Indigenous epistemology at the forefront of my work (Simonds and Christopher, 2013).

The integration of my family and community connections helps to dismantle the ideology that Western beliefs and methodologies hold priority in academic settings. Indigenous ways of being and knowing have a sound footing in Western settings, including education, academia, and research. I intentionally drew on my family and community to challenge the Western paradigm

in research, which can contribute to devaluing and marginalizing other ways of knowing (Simonds and Christopher, 2013).

Community Partner and Elder Advisor

When choosing my committee, it was crucial to have people on it who had impacted my journey. My Uncle Sempúyan Stewart Gonzales has always been a beacon of knowledge, sharing with me in many capacities over the past 10 years, and because of this, I asked him to be part of my learning journey for my master's program. My Uncle has played an instrumental part in visibility and representation in our Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh'Úxwumixw community. As a Band member, councillor, two-spirit advocate, and cultural/language knowledge holder, he sets the standard for what it means to be Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh. His love and acceptance are unconditional, and he truly walks alongside every community member.

In my observation and through personal connections with my Uncle, whom I have come to know since my late mother's passing, he has welcomed me with open arms. I first met my uncle when I was entering fatherhood and bringing my son to the on-reserve parent program, run by Mother Bear Child and Family Development. He connected with me, always sharing family stories and explaining the rich and diverse kinship systems in our community. He would always greet me with a hug, a compliment, and kind words, such as "it's nice to see you, nephew." It was a genuine connection that made me feel like I had a place in the community. I have observed him over the years doing spiritual and ceremonial work for many Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh'Úxwumixw families and doing good work with the family programs. He is now a council member for the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh'Úxwumixw and works tirelessly to acquire new knowledge of political systems that once denied our people. Because of this and my connection with him, I was honoured to have him accept the role of the community partner and Elder in my committee.

I sat with my Uncle through various stages of my research while I was gathering, piecing, weaving and finalizing the components of my research and blanket. He was able to see the project unfold and offer me teachings, his personal experience in post-secondary, and even family stories that added to the energy of the blanket. It was important for me to not only have him be part of my committee but to share my progression with him, as his voice and experiences help bring my story full circle. He honoured me with stories and understandings of current issues and challenges in our communities. As a knowledge holder, he also shared teachings and stories from our rich community and nation that connect the threads of the past with our current reality and will also direct us to future outcomes. He emphasized the critical need for more Skwxwú7mesh-based research to support the teaching and transmission of knowledge systems and structures to current and future community members. The knowledge he shared with me strengthens the community fabric (Davidson & Davidson, 2018). I hope one day I can achieve half of the success and commitment he has given back to our Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw people.

Methods for Working with Community

As mentioned in the previous section, although my blanket is focused on my own story, my project also involved sharing my intentions and research process with family and Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw members using a community-engaged approach. This involved learning from and sharing knowledge through familial stories, personal experiences, and cultural practices. My intention was always to gift my blanket and story to my community. In this way, my methodology allowed me to forge, gather and weave “data” into a collective relationship of words to offer collaboration, in order to enhance our warehouse of knowledge as a community (MacLean and Wason-Ellam, 2006). In the following chapter, I explain in more detail how I plan on using Indigenous research methods to share my story with my community and honour the

Skw̄w̄w̄7mesh Úxwumixw knowledge systems that have been utilized and implemented for millennia. Strengths in my methodology acknowledged Indigenous ways of knowing by offering core values of interconnection and relationality, while maintaining responsibility to people, place, animals, ancestors, and the community (Palmer, 2023). This research provides an individual experience of identity while still honouring community togetherness.

Ethical Considerations

In terms of research ethics, I grounded my research in the foundation of my upbringing and the core values and teachings of my late parents. I was afforded an upbringing that included Christian beliefs, and I cannot deny this, as it is one of the intersections that has been woven into my story. As I move in and navigate the world around me, and when I come into relationship with people, I have chosen to adopt aspects of value systems that resonate with the person I am and want to be. I am also grounded in the foundation of my Skw̄w̄w̄7mesh Úxwumixw culture and teachings, which have been presented to me by my aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Additionally, my research ethics were guided and supported by the Kinship Rising ethical framework. This allowed me to instill principles of privacy, consent, confidentiality and commitment into my process. I followed these principles when including my Uncle's teachings as well as when drawing on my own learning from family and community members. I have ensured that my Uncle has full agency and autonomy over any information, teachings and experiences shared with me. I used a consent form (see Appendix A) to ensure that the details of the research were explicit and transparent. I also ensured that protocols around the history of our familial teachings were respected in their inherent rights.

Project Timeframe

I began working on my research proposal in March 2024 with my supervisor. I formed my committee in February 2024, after I had settled on my research direction. I began writing my research proposal and started designing my blanket in July of 2024. After ten months of pattern creation, cutting, gluing, and design, I completed my Story Blanket in February 2025. I completed my partial thesis draft in June 2025, and with considerable effort and determination, I plan to defend my research in August 2025.

Conclusion

As a newly identified Indigenous researcher, connecting to my Skwxwú7mesh roots is crucial in shaping how I perceive, move, and engage with the world around me. Concepts of resurgence and insurgence within research are apparent and highlight the strength of Indigenous worldviews. I see research as something fluid and always in motion, like a journey. As a new Indigenous researcher in the emergence phase (Finnegan, 2021), I am witnessing the power that two-eyed seeing brings to my practice. It allows me to take a step back and acknowledge my social location, privileges, and biases, in hopes of dismantling power discourses and collaborating with participants, the community, and the research itself from a more meaningful and authentic perspective (Finnegan, 2021). In conducting my research with the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, as a community member, using an art-based lens in the creation of my story blanket will help instill a sense of community identity in myself. The outcomes of my research contributed to a storytelling blanket that is accessible to all Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw community members today and for future generations to come.

Chapter 3. The Blanket



In this chapter, I share the story of making my blanket. My blanket is constructed of felt, wool, buttons and embroidery thread. Over a period of ten months, I designed, cut, hand-sewed, and machine-stitched every piece by hand. It is framed by a fringe border with button details and measures 64 inches x 48 inches or 5.5 ft x 4ft in length. In this chapter, I start with a multi-media story created to share the meaning of my blanket so that it can be shared with broader audiences. I then explain how I created the twelve panels and how each speaks to my understanding of self, acceptance, responsibility, and commitment to sharing my lived experiences.

Multimedia Story

To ensure that my project can be shared widely with my family, community, and diverse audiences, I created a multimedia story and audio that includes my rationale, process for making the blanket, and the impact family, culture, and community had in shaping, guiding and co-creating my lived experience. The project is shown on the Kinship Rising website and media platforms, which reach diverse audiences locally, nationally, and internationally. Through this multimedia story and the blanket, I hope to reach others within my community who are beginning their own journeys in bringing culture, community, and identity into their lives in a way that makes them feel seen and represented, and gives them agency in what that looks like for them.

The slideshow and audio story can be viewed at the following link on the Kinship Rising website:

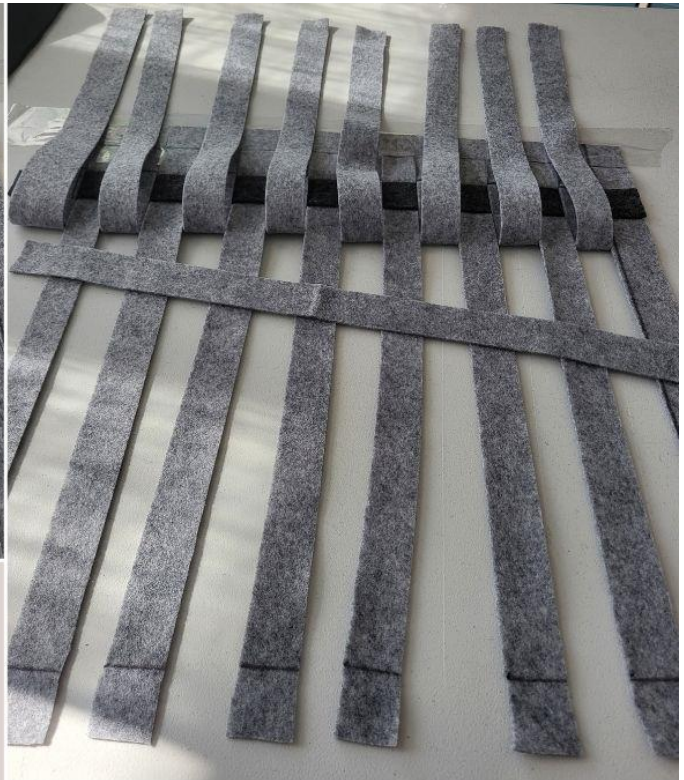
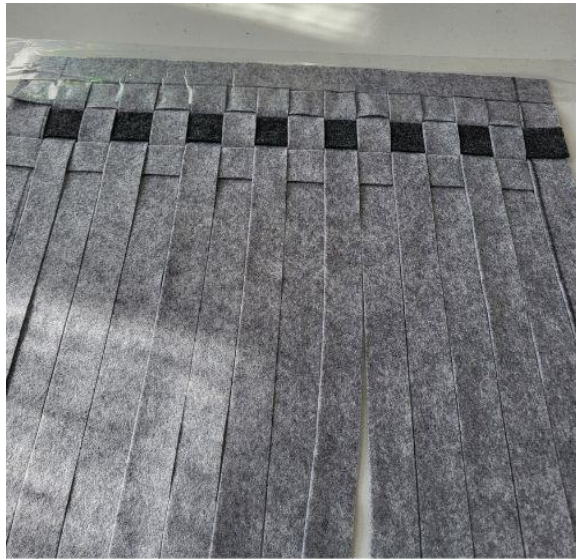
<https://onlineacademiccommunity.uvic.ca/kinshiprising/coming-home/>



Figure 1 Introduction and direction of image presentation.



Figure 2 Planning and sharing my process with my son.



WEAVING MY
IDENTITY, GUIDED
BY MY INNER SELF,
EXPERIENCES AND
KINSHIP
CONNECTIONS

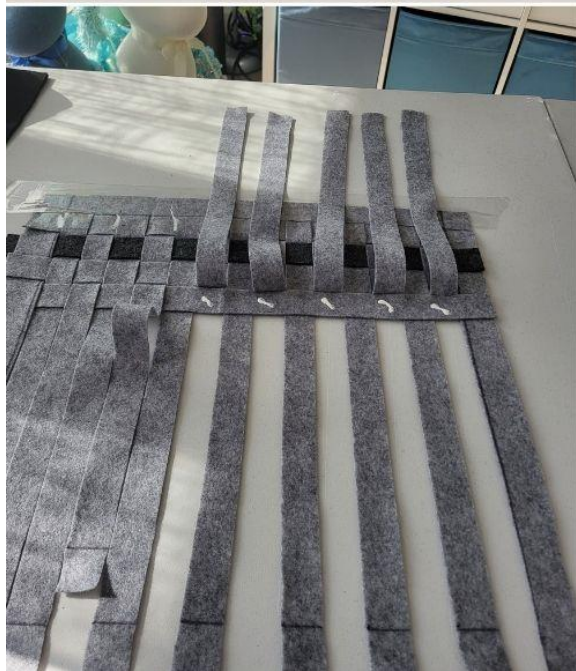


Figure 3 Weaving the foundation of my work, research, and methodology.



Figure 4 My late parents and how they shaped me into the person I am today.



Figure 5 The Big House foundation. Our home, the beginning.



Figure 6 Sibling and Fatherhood contribution.



Figure 7: Stepping into academia, one stepping stone at a time.



Figure 8: Connecting, being in relationship with the energy and intuitive nature of the materials.

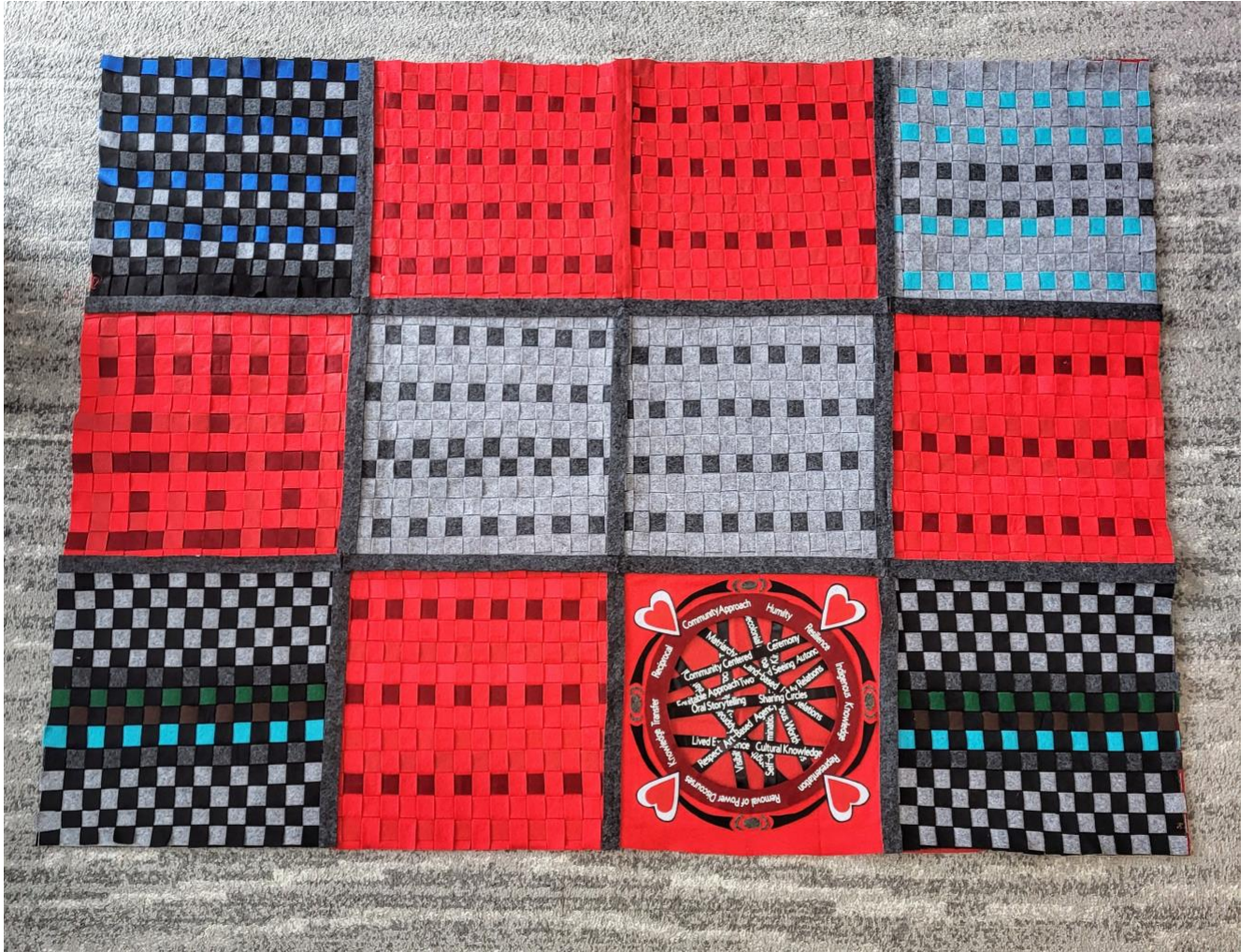


Figure 9 Blanket foundation, the medicine of connecting art and lived experience.



Figure10: The Matriarchs, removal of male dominant direction.

Indigenizing the toolbox: The Cedar Basket of Gathering



Figure 11: Indigenizing the toolbox, "Cedar basket of Gathering"



Figure 12: Frameworks, approaches and commitments to practice.



Figure13: Gatherings for my Cedar Basket.



Figure 14: Unveiling the Blanket at the University of Victoria and sharing in a relationship.

My Story Blanket covers me in acceptance, teachings, culture, connection, and medicine. I have given myself this Ceremony to strengthen my Skwxwú7mesh identity, commitments to community and future generations of Skwxwú7mesh People.



Figure 15: Walking with medicine, covering myself in my many identities, intersections, and lived experiences.



Figure 16: Moving forward for the betterment of myself, my family, and my community.

Making the Blanket

In this section, I describe the meaning of and connection to each panel.

Panel 1: The Transformation into my Indigenous Self



I begin my storytelling journey by speaking of my birth, or, let's say, rebirth, as I transformed into awareness, acknowledgment, and acceptance of my Indigenous mixed-race self. Growing up as a mixed-race person, I never had a proper understanding of all the intersections that made up my whole being. I lived in a whitewashed world in predominantly white spaces far removed from my traditional homelands. This left an emptiness and ongoing curiosity about the pieces of myself that were not seen, visible, accepted, or lived.

I started my panel by weaving a background of blues, grays, and blacks. These colours symbolize and connect me to the time of my birth. I was born at 10:00 p.m., an evening baby, and I have always been comfortable in the evening hours. The figure in the panel is my adult self, who is transforming as I learn, grow, evolve, and connect with my Indigenous identity. The

frogs that flank either side of the figure represent that transformation and its force. I have included an orange chrysanthemum, as it is the flower of my birth month. It is paramount to acknowledge aspects of my birth as a baby in connection with my rebirth as an adult, as these things are not interchangeable. Finally, the ancestor in the corner of the panel speaks to how we are always in connection, in relation, and on a journey with our past kinship networks.

This panel sets the tone for my personal acceptance and commitment to fostering ways to break cycles and patterns for future generations of my family. This includes my son and my sister, for whom I am a caregiver.

Panels 2/3: Big House of Dreams



Family is the foundation of a strong and connected home. My late parents fostered a nurturing approach to our upbringing, one that included connection, strong attachment, core values, and teachings that we still live by today. As a mixed-race Indigenous person with settler roots, I must honour and respect my late parents' decision to remove themselves from a

community that was still entrenched in racism, discrimination, and colonial harm. My late father was not Indigenous, but he respected and loved my mother and her culture. By leaving their hometown and my late mother's Indigenous community, they felt they were keeping us safe from the strong stereotypes and racism that my late mother endured growing up and attending Indian day school.

Our family's "big house" was built on core Christian values that family came first. We were very close-knit and did everything together. We had large family gatherings and intimate family holidays, but the commonality was always that family was at the centre.

In this panel, I showcase a Big House, or longhouse, in reference to my Skwxwú7mesh roots. Despite my late father not being Indigenous, I used an Indigenous approach because I already had a firm understanding of my settler heritage, and I wanted this project and story blanket to follow my journey into my Indigenous self. I placed a cross on the bottom left, as our family's foundation was rooted in Christianity. While being Christian can be taboo in some Indigenous communities, I cannot deny the strength and values I took away from this part of my identity. On the right-hand side, a red heart symbolizes the unconditional love my parents gave to me and my siblings. My parents not only cared for their biological children but also took care of their nieces and nephews. As young children, we knew that while we had a strong sense of family, not all children had the same opportunities to experience a stable environment. We embraced and accepted our parents being caregivers to others.

At the top of my panel, two wolves are featured on either side, paying honour and respect to my late parents. This art piece is alive and is always in a state of transformation. We are never stagnant as individuals, and our experiences are constantly evolving. At the top of the Big House, a face represents the Creator or Great Spirit that was and is our foundation. Two paddles on

either side of the door represent us as a family, paddling together through all our experiences. The paddles showcase the close connections we have and how we support one another on our journeys.

Panel 4: Familial teachings



Our parents were clear that my siblings and I needed to be there for one another and to respect the teachings we were privileged to receive. Families, whether chosen or by blood, share a commonality and a set of values that we bring to each other and pass on to future kin.

This panel highlights the significance of shared goals, strong values, and a foundation of teachings that foster the development of distinct communities. The main piece features six figures representing me and my siblings in a canoe as we journey through life together. All the paddles are in the same position, representing synchronicity and unity. There are two Yew Yews (Orca) fins poking through the sea, symbolizing the Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh understanding of Yew Yews

as being collective and loyal in their family structures. My late parents taught my siblings and me to be loyal and respect the foundation that siblings provide for one another.

Since this is also a corner section of my story blanket, it is flanked by another ancestor piece in the corner, representing and paying respect to the foundation of our lineages and their crucial roles in our current standing.

Panel 5: Community embrace



Death is such a tragic thing in all our lives, and in my opinion, we navigate and process death based on the connections and relationships we built with the person who passed on. My late mother passed away in 2014, and this put a considerable dent in the road of my life's journey. My world stopped. I had to learn how to pivot in the process of grieving. My mother had been offered a home in her Indigenous community, but unfortunately, she passed away one

year before its completion and never got to come home. My father accepted the house and moved me and my little sister, who was six at the time, with him. This marked our return to the community, or the beginning of my “coming home” journey as my Sk̄w̄x̄w̄ú7mesh Indigenous self. We were introduced to the vast kinship networks that exist in Indigenous communities and to how our Sk̄w̄x̄w̄ú7mesh Úxwumixw people see families and walk alongside them as family members pass on to our ancestors. This was my first time learning and experiencing the Matriarch role in Indigenous communities and how crucial this role is in supporting the Ménmen (children) of Sk̄w̄x̄w̄ú7mesh Úxwumixw people.

There are angel wings in the top left corner. They symbolize and pinpoint the moment I stepped into my Sk̄w̄x̄w̄ú7mesh Úxwumixw community after our late mother passed. A huge component of my moving with my dad and little sister to our late mother’s community was to bring her spirit home, as we couldn’t bring her physical body home.

The larger part of the panel showcases a heart with female figures around it. This tells the story of how the matriarchs of our families came in and supported my late mother’s children, stepping into the Matriarchal role to walk alongside us, but also to pay respect to their relationship with our late mother. This shifted my perspective on my upbringing, which was patriarchal, and highlighted the Matriarch position/role in a family unit. The purple flower pays respect to female energy, as well as to the connection to land and place.

The figures at the bottom left and right depict a story of fatherhood. This is the moment in my life’s timeline when I took on my late mother’s role of nurturing and caring, and stepped up to care for my younger sister, as well as becoming the guardian of my son (biological nephew). The stone-shaped felt pieces are a thread in my story blanket, depicting how each phase of my life has had stepping stones to understanding and realization.

Panels 6/7: What next?



These two panels are a subtle reflection of myself being at the centre of this work, story, and project. I have always appreciated the power of knowledge. However, my educational journey in high school was not awe-inspiring and was sometimes detrimental. The adults at North Delta Senior Secondary told me to focus on getting a job, as I was not post-secondary material. They told me a narrative that contributed to how I saw myself and how I navigated the world outside of high school. They did not see a future for me in post-secondary education.

The stage of my life reflected in these panels was one of observation and listening to the matriarchs and Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh community around me as I began to unpack decades of silence, blindness, and submissiveness, which was the denial of my Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh and Indigenous self. The weaving of the base panels highlights how we are all interconnected, and our experiences are interwoven with multiple perspectives, which creates strength in what makes up the fabric of the community. The owl and book represent my longing for higher education that I sought but was too afraid to pursue, due to past experiences of not feeling good enough or that I belonged.

Stepping stones illustrate growth, understanding, and acceptance and that everything is possible when you have supportive people (a community) walking alongside you on your journey. The flowers in all four corners again represent the connection to land and the theme that place holds value in our decisions. When we are rooted in our authentic selves, we can see the world through a different perspective.

There is a spot I left purposefully blank on the right-hand side of the tree, which represents the longing for something more, the willingness to be accepted, and an ongoing search for a sense of belonging.

Panel 8: Steppingstones



In 2018, I mustered up the courage to enter post-secondary education. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do or which direction to follow, but I needed to break my cycle of self-denial and self-judgment to see if I had what it took to attain the things I was once told were not for me. I

had my little sister and son looking at me, and I wanted to be a role model for them, to show them that they could achieve anything they wanted, knowing I would be there to support every choice they made.

I call this panel “stepping stones” because this was my entry point into higher education. I started with a foundation certificate in an Indigenous program, hoping it would help me find my grounding as I figured out who my future self would be. This was the best decision I made for myself, as it aligned me with the Indigenous centre on campus, where I was able to connect with my indigenous students, as well as my uncles and aunties who were elders in residence or students, who were my late mother’s first cousins, or cousins/siblings per Sḵw̱wú7mesh kinship teachings. My aunt, who was attending university as a student, was born one month before my late mother and grew up with her as best friends. She took me under her wing, telling me stories of their past and our families, and provided a motherly role that I surely missed. My uncle was an Elder-in-residence and shared stories of their upbringing, creating a whole new perspective of what family and belonging meant. They saw me, they supported me, and they wanted me to be successful.

One day, I walked into the Indigenous centre, and my uncle was sitting in the room. I sat down beside him and said hello. He said, “Nephew, I see you coming into the centre every day with your head down and unsure of yourself in this space.” He added, “Nephew, I want you to hold your head up high, be stoic in your presence. You are a strong Sḵw̱wú7mesh warrior, don’t let anyone tell you differently.” I had goosebumps and felt a rush of energy as we shared that moment, and his words changed my life. From that day forward, I walked around with a stronger sense of self and pride in who I am, and for the first time, I felt seen and worthy of being Indigenous, Sḵw̱wú7mesh, and a post-secondary student.

The panel continues the theme of a woven background, which always depicts and represents the diversity of our lived experiences, values, and the teachings we bring to our journey. There is a grad cap and diploma at the top, which represent the completion of my first certificate program and the beginning of my journey toward my undergraduate degree. You will see two hands that represent the Creator, who has blessed me with strength, knowledge, and perseverance. Finally, at the bottom, a felt piece shows a building representing post-secondary education and how the stepping stones led to it.

Panel 9: Gathering the knowledge



The experiences, courses, and people I met in my undergraduate degree cemented the direction and approach I now take in life. In post-secondary education, the education you receive can be overwhelming, as you are given a short amount of time to learn a great deal. I had a professor once say, “Listen to your intuition and focus on the approaches, frameworks, and praxis you want to bring back to your community.” This was also a time of celebration as I

completed my second program and received my bachelor's degree from the University of Victoria. Still, it was also a time of mourning as I lost my dad before graduation.

This panel starts with a woven background of grey, black, green, and blue. This was intentional, as it represents the foundation of my knowledge about my ancestors, land, and water. Angel wings in the top left corner pay respect to and acknowledge the loss of my late father. He played a crucial role in my journey.

There are pieces of representation of an orange shirt, a red dress, and partial cedar weaving. These represent new concepts, experiences and movements from my undergraduate education that I had not previously been aware of. When I began my undergraduate degree, it marked the start of discussions around decolonization, truth and reconciliation, and the discrimination that many minority groups face in both post-secondary institutions and society as well. Growing up, these experiences of colonization were not part of my educational learning and were not visible to me, as most of my early years into adulthood were whitewashed. I graduated from high school in 2000, and the conversations I was now hearing about Indigenous people, rights and justice were never spoken as openly as they are today.

There is a cedar bough in the top right corner to honour and include the land as medicine in my journey. My appreciation and connection to the land, for myself and my family, is non-negotiable. We have discovered a new perspective and ways of being in relation to the environment around us, which have enabled a deeper sense of self and connection to our Skwxwú7mesh roots. A turtle is bridging two panels, symbolizing the ongoing journey of gathering knowledge that will guide my current and future practice. The teaching I received from my late aunt was that the feather kin, water kin, and spirit elements formed the great land that we

call Turtle Island for the two-legged and four-legged kin that make up the vast kinship networks of our land.

Panel 10: Indigenous and other knowledges honoured



Education has afforded me many privileges, a better sense of self, and a deeper understanding of how we form smaller communities of support while still seeking connection from a broader community or a sense of identity. After completing my bachelor's degree, I moved into my graduate studies. I knew I had gained a lot, but there was always a background voice of doubt, one that questioned whether I belonged or was worthy enough for this part of my story. I pushed through, acquired greater knowledge, enhanced my understanding of self, and developed a pride in myself that removed doubt and competition

with others. I wanted this for myself, and I could only achieve it by focusing on my own goals rather than comparing myself to others and the gifts they received. The Creator has blessed each one of us with a set of skills for the purposes we will serve in life. We can't all be the same, or the world around us would not be as vibrant as it is.

This panel continues the woven background to indicate that we, as people, are diverse in our makeup and grow stronger in our self-awareness when we layer and build on our skills, gifts, and teachings. Weaving is a strong theme in my work, creating a sense of stability within myself.

This panel also illustrates a pivotal time in my life when I began working for an on-reserve food pantry in my community, connecting with families across the nation and supporting their food needs. This is depicted in the salmon and feast bowl at the bottom of the panel. Food is a ceremonial and collective way to connect with people and a strongly valued teaching within Indigenous communities. Food brings people together. My work in the food pantry fostered a sense of self, community, and belonging/purpose for me.

The circle with people at the top represents community pride, strength, and the connections I made and want to build on in my future frontline practice as a Child and Youth Care practitioner working with families and community. There is a medicine wheel on the top left, featuring a woven cedar bracelet that honours the education I am receiving in my graduate program and how the program has guided me in grounding my knowledge in areas of practice that resonate with me. The stepping stones continue, indicating that our life journeys are constantly in motion, leading to new opportunities.

Panel 11: Preparing my cedar basket of gathering



“Tipping of the canoe” was a concept I learned from a school instructor, Cha-win-is (2024), who had learned it from her grandfather. It describes a person in a canoe full of teachings, culture, and values that tipped over, spilling everything into the water. When the person got back into the canoe, they had to quickly grab what they felt was most important to pass on to future generations. This was a powerful story and connected to my research. It provided me with an opportunity to understand how we cannot hoard concepts, approaches, frameworks, and knowledge; they must be strategically collected, organized, and shared with the world around us.

This panel represents my canoe being filled with concepts, approaches, and frameworks that speak directly and intuitively to me, guiding my practice. The large circle piece symbolizes

how circles are open, not hierarchical, and inclusive, bringing diversity and visibility to all who enter. The Salish eye around the circle represents the eyes of the Creator and ancestors, community, family, and the external community, all of which witness the work being done in a good way. The hearts represent my commitment to removing power and privilege in my practice and meeting my community members and families where they are at.

Concepts and teachings of humility, reciprocity, two-eyed seeing, matriarchal roles, community approaches, cultural knowledge, ceremony, and Indigenous research methods, such as storytelling, will guide my work in dismantling systems of power, racism, and discrimination that, unfortunately, remain visible and active in our current environments.

Panel 12: The journey continues – My commitment to my praxis



By the time I reached this part of my story, I had gained a better sense of who I am, and the outcome surprised me. I was always seeking a sense of belonging or a community to call my own, but I already felt a sense of belonging. To belong or be part of a community, I needed to do

the work to heal myself and recognize that the land, ancestors, and connections I made along my journey had already connected me to micro-communities.

In this final panel, the woven background continues, respecting ancestors, land, and water. A circle in the middle represents the ongoing learning and discovery we experience throughout our life journeys. A pink and purple flower on the bottom right reminds me to connect and ground to the land, teaching me that the land is not separate from me but an essential part of my sense of self and belonging. When I feel lonely or sad, or need guidance, I can always connect with the land for answers and solace.

The ancestors are represented in the bottom right corner, with the four pieces in each corner depicting the protection they offer along our paths. The cedar bough is a traditional medicine for cleansing, and something the Skwxwú7mesh people use in ceremony. I included the cedar bough in this final panel to honour and be in ceremony with the completion of my work.

A cedar basket at the bottom represents my toolbox of resources. In university and in employment settings, people often say, “add it to your toolbox” when you learn something new. To Indigenize my approach, I have transformed the toolbox analogy into my “cedar basket of gatherings,” reflecting how I see life and how we gather and forage for things that speak to us and contribute to our individual selves.

Culture is a commitment to myself and to respecting the stories, songs, and teachings. I created a felt drum alongside a moccasin and a shoe, representing the dual worlds that Indigenous people navigate, where reconciliation is often performative rather than an actual practice. Navigating these systems to create change is what Indigenous and mixed-race Indigenous people must do to have a seat at the table.

The journey never stops. We are always learning new things, understanding things from different perspectives, and seeking healing and health for the people and families around us. This may be the final panel in my story blanket, but it is not the final stage of my journey. My journey will be ongoing until the ancestors call me home.

Conclusion

I adapted my research project to reflect the person I am, who I want to be, and the commitment I made to myself to uncover the blurred image of the boy looking into the mirror and not being able to recognize what he sees. The methodology I utilized to develop my Story Blanket has allowed me to fill in the missing pieces and focus on the pixelation of the boy's reflection. I see who I am as a mixed-race Indigenous person, I understand the trials and tribulations I have gone through, and I acknowledge the privileges that I hold. The process of making and doing, as well as using this arts-based approach, defines Indigenous epistemologies and ways of knowing, which are rooted in relationship, honesty, and reciprocity (Brubacher et al., 2021). By piecing together, weaving, and joining stories, experiences, and relationships, I have developed my craft and methodology as an Indigenous researcher (Pottinger, 2024). The outcome of my research has led me to realize that I have always belonged, and culture and identity are shaped and formed through the work of individual understanding, while also having agency in self-determination and community connection.

Chapter 4. Final Reflections and Conclusion

My journey for belonging has been realized. I have always belonged,

I have come from the land, and the land is that foundation.

Belonging wasn't just about people but being situated in my sense of self.

(Joshua Houghton, 2025)

Storytelling is at the core of our human selves. As Indigenous people, the connection between words, lived experiences, and familial systems is the foundation of our teachings, learning, cultural awareness, and relationships within vast and diverse kinship networks. The creation of my kinship story blanket documents the story of myself in connection to the world around me. I have always been drawn to creative works, and I appreciate this gift from the Creator. My blanket shows the growth, evolution, and journey of my life in connection to my family, land, water, ancestors, and kinship networks. We are individuals within macro systems, and with my blanket, I aimed to express the individual that I am, while co-creating with the environment around me.

Like other Indigenous practitioners, researchers, and advocates, my research is a contribution and the beginning part of bridging the gap between Western and Indigenous research, ways of being, knowing, and relating (Wildcat et al., 2014). Reclaiming my Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh roots and Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh traditions as part of my intersectionality will contribute to dismantling current oppressive Euro-Western research approaches (Dulfano, 2017). My research aims to elevate and make other ways of knowing equitable and to showcase the strengths of Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw people and their knowledge systems, as well as the

beautiful connections among our vast kinship networks that form the foundation of our community identity.

Lessons Learned

As I shared in my methodology chapter, some overarching questions I asked myself during my research process and the making of my blanket included: What does community identity mean to me? How has colonization impacted the Sḵw̱w̱ú7mesh Úxwumixw kinship networks? How do we welcome back displaced and disconnected community members? What cultural values, oral histories and traditional teachings do I want to pass on to future generations?

Looking back now at what I have learned from exploring these important questions, I have gained invaluable insights into how to promote healing and wellbeing through hands-on, arts-based, storytelling Indigenous research. As I conducted my research and connected with Elders, extended family members, and knowledge holders in the Sḵw̱w̱ú7mesh Úxwumixw community, I now understand that the foundation of connection and knowledge in Indigenous contexts is rooted in relationships (Beveridge et al., 2021). Importantly, I have learned about the research gaps and how difficult it can be to connect to one's community when you have been removed for long periods of time (Cabellon, 2021).

Family members like my Uncle Sempulyan embraced the person that I was, walked alongside me in the passing of my late mother and late father and helped me ground myself in our community. With the knowledge and lived experience I have come to embrace, my blanket represents a deeper connection to my Indigenous roots, my self-acceptance, and a sense of well-being. My educational and research journeys have allowed me to walk alongside Sḵw̱w̱ú7mesh Úxwumixw community members in co-creating dialogue and connections that enrich not only my own story but also community-focused relations.

When it comes to research about Indigenous people, we still hear a lot about deficit-based social determinants and institutional inequities, but not enough emphasis on stories and research on community integration due to displacement from colonization. Stories of reconnection like this research can help address and heal the ongoing effects of colonial structures and assimilatory systems, such as residential and child welfare institutions, which continue to remove and disconnect generations of Indigenous people from their kinship networks, ancestral territories, and cultural connections.

As I reflect on the many people who have impacted my journey, I always leave myself last. This time, it is intentional; this research project brings my education and journey full circle. I now have a strong sense of self, acceptance of all my intersections, and pride in the outcomes of my educational success. I have learned many things, but the most important thing is that I have always belonged. Belonging wasn't about finding a large demographic of people, but understanding what I needed to seek my understanding and acceptance of my identity. My family, my ancestors, and the land have always protected and guided me along my journey. I am worthy, I am strong, and I do belong. I acknowledge the good, challenging, and positive work I have done that has brought me to where I stand today.

Knowledge Mobilization

In terms of sharing my research with broader audiences, my multimedia story and audio are featured on the Kinship Rising website and media platforms. It is important that these resources reach diverse audiences locally, nationally, and internationally, including Indigenous communities, students, researchers, and other stakeholders such as frontline practitioners. I know that there are many Indigenous people in my community, as well as across Turtle Island, who have experienced disconnection and who are eager to reconnect with their communities. Many

Indigenous students and practitioners want to engage in this kind of important healing work. I would like frontline workers and other students to gain a new perspective on how we can approach our work in a multitude of ways. The outcome that we want is respect, love, relationships, equity, representation, visibility, compassion, empathy, and dignity; I could go on, but how we get there can look differently and does not have to fit within one preferred paradigm. My approach showcases my gifts and commitments as an Indigenous mixed-race person, and it is okay that it lives outside of the lines of what is considered traditional practice. I cannot change how I view and interact with the world, but I can choose how I treat the people in it. My work sees people the way I want to be seen, as a person with their own unique sense of self. With my research project, I no longer wish to fit in, and I no longer feel the need to compare my approach to different methods used by my peers. I hope that others will see this and honour their unique way of sharing their gifts with the world, unapologetically.

Part of my commitment to reconciliation is to put knowledge and words into action, which will enable me to be an active participant in reconciliation. In taking action to present my work, I took part in the 2025 Weaving Connections Conference at the University of Victoria in April 2025. I unveiled my blanket and presented my story, my research direction, and the final outcome of my methodology, art-based and storytelling approaches. In the future, I hope to reach out to the University of Victoria and the School of Child and Youth Care to display my blanket and supporting document for students to witness. I will see if the Kinship Rising research group would be interested in hosting talking circles and story panel workshops with youth, elders, and educational instructors.

In addition to sharing my research with a broader network of communities, students and researchers, this research can aid other Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw community members seeking

a starting point for their journeys of discovery and can be used as a knowledge tool to inform future supports and outreach within the community. I hope that my blanket can support a process of reconnection to Skwxwú7mesh culture in a way that makes community members feel seen and represented and gives them agency in what that looks like for them. I will connect with the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw Education Department and the Chief and Council to explore how my research can be utilized to benefit the community and be accessible to community members. I will also approach team leaders and managers in various departments of the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw, drawing on the relationships I have built through networking to initiate that dialogue of communication. Finally, I will personally share my project with my immediate family and extended kinship networks with the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw.

Future proposed community workshop

Another idea I have is to offer story blanket-making workshops in my community. The workshops would be planned by interested departments within the Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw. They could be customized for different groups based on age, time allotted per workshop, and what learning objectives or outcomes the programs are hoping to see. Participants from selected demographic groups would be invited to engage with their personal experiences, teachings, and familial connections by creating a story blanket for themselves. As participants (community members) plan, design, and build on their blankets, I would walk around and ask my guiding questions. At the end of each workshop, participants would have the opportunity to share their work and take their piece home to share with their families, passing down their family history to future generations or if done in a school setting, could be pieced together by the teachers to form a community quilt.

Sample Workshop Outline: Workshop for Storytelling Blanket

WHO: This blanket-making workshop outline can be customized for diverse audiences. It can be adapted for school-age to elder programs. The workshop can be facilitated on various topics, including community belonging, familial stories, oral history documentation, and exploring the participants' sense of belonging.

WHAT: The medium presented in each workshop would be determined by the age demographic and lessons taught and shared with the age group. For school-age children, I would first encourage the use of paper and colouring materials. For older youth, adults, and elders, I would opt for felt or wool materials in the creation of larger projects.

After sharing my blanket and process, I would invite participants to engage in small groups as a way to plan and decide what community, culture, and family mean to them. We would explore something they would like to document as part of their blanket. Depending on the program and the desired outcome, this process would vary. For example, if doing a workshop with school-aged children or in the elders' centre, each person could create one panel they wanted to share, and when completed, the teacher or program leader could piece them all together on a wall to form a community quilt.

WHERE: The workshop could be implemented in various locations, such as schools, community recreation centres, department boardrooms, youth centres, family homes, and elder centres. It would be customized to suit the chosen demographic. Each Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumixw program or department has its own office, boardroom or workshop space that they could use. These spaces already have chairs, tables and technology to share a PowerPoint presentation. As part of their protocols, programs provide food and drinks when they put on workshops for the community.

WHY: The workshop speaks to the importance of understanding who we are as individuals within a community setting, which helps to set the tone and foundation for a sense of belonging. Documentation of oral stories allows us to share these pieces of art with the greater community and/or pass them down to future generations.

HOW: This workshop can be implemented in one or more days, depending on the scale of the story blanket. For classroom workshops, each participant would create their own panel, and at the end of the day, the teachers would put them all together to form a classroom quilt for display. For older groups, 36" x 36" felt pieces could be used and possibly completed in one or two-day workshops, while also offering participants supplies to bring home and add to their stories. These proposed workshops would be facilitated by myself; if programs wanted to take the lead, I would provide training and consultation about my methodology to make sure the delivery is done in a meaningful way. I could also engage as a co-facilitator, but my initial plan is to be the primary facilitator.

Sample workshop outline

- Opening the Circle – prayer and song
- Introduction of the facilitator and participants, and workshop guidelines
- Introduction to the theme of the story blanket workshop
- Introduction to materials
- Explanation of facilitator/s' example and possible PowerPoint and workshop outline
- Allow participants time to sketch and plan their ideas - this can be done in groups or individually
- Participants choose their materials

- The facilitator walks around the room and guides participants, asks questions, and interacts to create a safe enough space for creation
- Facilitator/team offers support where needed
- Sharing circle: Participants come together for a closing circle and sharing of each participant's journey into the start of their story blankets
- Offer contact information in case participants have any follow-up questions
- Close workshop
- Food and beverages will be offered, as sharing food is part of the ceremonial process.

Blanket making and art-based practice offer a diverse set of outcomes based on the intentions going in. Depending on the topic and approach, it would be best to ask one to two elders to come in and sit with the participants during the workshop. Peer support workers from the wellness program could also be invited to support participants with emotions that might come up. The Słwǫwú7mesh Úxwumixw has a diverse set of mental health and support programs in place, like elders in residence, peer support, trauma therapists and counsellors over three departments, which would provide valuable support.

My hope is that after each workshop, I would create art panels from my experiences and stories shared by participants, as a way to document the experiences and provide a body of community-based knowledge that can be showcased in the form of a community quilt. Because of assimilatory practices from colonization, our families lost their rights to practice, share, and pass on our rich and diverse stories and culture. I hope to reach others within my community who are beginning their reconnection journeys. As part of decolonizing our footsteps and the resurgence of our cultural practices, these workshops will reestablish the methodology of art-

based practice in relation to storytelling in order to honour our rich and diverse Indigenous pedagogies.

Final reflections – Closing the circle

We are all living research, always in a state of relating to the environment around us. We as people are not homogeneous in design; we are different in our entirety, and that is beautiful. Belonging to me has a different meaning and representation. It is about agency, connection, relationship, and self-determination. My story blanket speaks to the evolution of my existence and my commitment to move forward in a good way.

This research project was important work for me in understanding who I am as an Indigenous person. It was an opportunity for me to break generational trauma from decades of harm in residential schools, Indian day schools, and racism from external entities off-reserve. I wanted to model strong awareness and agency for my son, younger sister, and the Mémén of my Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh community. The research journey provided me with a lens for observing how individuals are situated within a community. I was able to understand that we all have our own set of lived experiences that affect how we connect and belong to a community through a strong sense of self-identity.

In terms of the implications for others trying to reconnect with their nation and homelands, every person's approach will be unique to themselves. Through my journey and work with Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw community members, I have come to understand that each person has their own unique wants, needs, and journey in connection. I know that our trauma, lived experiences, or disconnection will play a critical role in an individual's plan of coming home. I think it is imperative to do self-healing work, identify the key factors of what you want in belonging, and consider whether culture will play a role in your journey. Connecting

to the elders of your family, listening to their stories, and sharing your family's history is where you start. It just takes one connection to start your journey of finding yourself in a community, and only you can determine how small or big you take it.

Colonization has played a considerable role in the separation, disconnection, and displacement of my Indigenous self and how I understand and practice my culture. Through healing, I have dismantled power dynamics that are no longer in play. Only I get to decide how and where I belong. Only I have the agency to gather and carry on the rich history of my family and community teachings. I get to determine how I walk and connect with the elements around me. I am me; I am strong, I am worthy, and I belong. These are my words.

All My Relations. U'siyam

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Appendix A. Consent Form



Consent to participate in the Kinship Rising research project facilitated by Joshua Houghton

Please read and sign at the bottom to acknowledge your understanding of and agreement to the outlined consent to participate in the Kinship Rising project.

You are invited to participate in **Kinship Rising**, an Indigenous research study that supports Indigenous young people's healing and wellbeing through hands-on workshops and art making. Kinship Rising is focused on using art and storytelling for healing from colonial violence, reconnecting with land, and promoting respectful relations with ourselves and all our relations. Our workshops use circles, storytelling, land-based materials such as cedar, hide and plant medicines, as well as art making such as pictures, painting, storytelling, poetry, blogs, video, crafts, beading, digital media, and much more. Kinship Rising is Indigenous-led and based at the University of Victoria on lək̓ʷəŋən homelands. For more information, please visit Kinship Rising at kinshiprising.uvic.ca

Why does Kinship Rising matter?

Indigenous youth and communities are not often included in research about us, especially when it comes to our well-being. You will get an opportunity to share your experiences with others who will value and listen to your opinion.

Who and How?

Indigenous (i.e., Native, First Nations, Métis, Inuit, mixed Indigenous) youth ages 12+, students, community members, knowledge keepers and Elders are invited to participate. We invite you to take part in individual sessions and/or group workshops. You can choose when, how long and how many sessions to attend and what materials you would like to use. During our workshops, you will be invited to share your experiences in whatever way works for you; this can include storytelling, sharing in circle, and/or making art using land-based materials (e.g., hide, cedar, shells) and other media such as taking pictures or video, painting, making crafts, beading, blanket-making, and much more. Meetings will be in locations that are accessible to you, including outdoors (parks, beaches, etc.) or indoors (agencies, UVic, your home, a restaurant or cafe, etc.)

Our Research team

Our research team is Indigenous, and we have training in doing arts-based, youth- and community-engaged research. We understand the history of colonialism and inter-generational issues. Even though you may personally know a member of our research team, there is no pressure at all for you to participate; you should only participate for yourself. You can also choose not to answer any question, stop participating or leave a session at any point without any judgment or negative impact, and without having to explain why. It won't impact our relationship with you in any way, now or in the future.

Joshua Houghton will be completing this research as part of an MA program in Child, Youth, Family and Community Studies (School of Child and Youth Care) at the University of Victoria. This means that they are going to write a Master's thesis (a research report) in their own name, under the supervision of their supervisory committee that includes Dr. Sandrina Carere, the study lead. The thesis will be published online on the University of Victoria thesis and dissertation portal and a copy can be provided to you. This will not change in any way the terms outlined in this consent form (i.e., what we describe in the consent form will apply to the thesis/dissertation as well).

Limitations

Because you will be sharing your perspectives on personal topics, you may have emotional reactions during the discussions. You may also experience judgment from others, particularly in a group session. However, this project's focus is not on digging for painful stories but rather on highlighting a vision for healing and change. You will be supported in discussing only the topics you feel comfortable sharing; we have an experienced team to assist you in feeling safeguarded and respected. You will be in control of how much you want to share and how: You can take a break, choose not to answer any question, ask for supports, stop participating or leave a session at any point without any judgment or negative impact, and without having to explain why. It won't impact our relationship with you in any way, now or in the future. Supports will also be offered following the session. If needed, an independent professional Indigenous counsellor can be available free of charge to speak with you virtually (phone, Zoom, email, etc.). The counsellor's name is Angela Scott, a registered clinical counsellor, who can be contacted through kinshiprising@uvic.ca.

Can I withdraw from this project even after signing this form?

Yes, your participation is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw at any point. Simply let our team know or email us at kinshiprising@uvic.ca. If you decide to stop, we will not be able to remove artwork you have contributed to the mural, but we can remove your other individual contributions and any images of you. If you were in a group workshop, we will document the broad points of your contribution for our use only, so that the contributions of other participants still make sense. It is important to know that once we share the materials (at the school, in a public venue, on our website, in reports and publications, etc.) we can no longer remove them from the public realm.

How will I decide what I want to share?

Depending on what you agree to, our team can take pictures, video and audio while you are doing your artwork or discussing topics. Your artwork (i.e., collage, poetry, beadwork, painting, sculpture, drawing, etc.) will be photographed and/or videoed, and the original piece is yours to keep and will remain your property. You can decide whether to use your real name or a code name, and to use or not use identifying information or images (such as images of your face, parts of your body, your voice, or your surroundings). If you choose to be identified in some way, you will select how. This may mean, for example, that you select a picture or video clip that identifies you and/or your voice, or that you want your name attached to or left out of your artwork or your words. You can also choose to remain anonymous in the dissemination. This means we will not show any pictures of you, and we will assign you a confidential code name that will not appear on public materials.

Once you have completed your session(s), we will invite you to a final meeting to present what we collected, including any transcripts of your words. You will receive a final honorarium to review and approve what has been created before anything is shared and published. In signing this consent form, you agree that we can use, distribute and reproduce the images and files you agree to share with us, as outlined in this consent form.

Please note that during our sessions, participants are not able to take pictures, audio or video of other participants. Any information you share that directly identifies others, such as family or community members, will not be used in this study.

Regardless of whether you want to be identified or not in the materials you produce, there are limits to your confidentiality in this study. Many participants have heard about this study, and outdoor and sessions in communities, agencies, schools, and institutions may not be entirely private, which means others might know or see who is participating even if they cannot hear what you share. We will remind everybody in a group workshop to respect confidentiality by not repeating what they have heard outside the workshop. But it is important to know that the research team cannot ensure that everything that you share in a group will remain completely confidential.

The final limitation to confidentiality is our legal duty to report any disclosures of abuse, including sexual and physical abuse, as well as threats to harm yourself or others. This responsibility relates to current cases of abuse against a minor that have not already been disclosed and followed up with. In the case of a disclosure, we will need to stop the session; we will stay with you and support you while we contact the appropriate service provider in your region for follow up.

How will this study be shared with others?

We will share the materials you agree to share on a public website called kinshiprising.uvic.ca. To make sure that the important outcomes of this project are shared with others, we will also share the information with others such as youth, researchers, service providers, policy makers, students, families and community members. Agreed-upon data (i.e., pictures, stories, artwork,

video, findings, quotes, etc.) will be widely disseminated on our website, to partner organizations, and in presentations, writing, publications, reports and workshops. Youth- and community-friendly materials will be produced and shared free of charge.

Any information identifying you, such as your consent form, photos, audio and video files, notes, artwork and transcripts of recordings will be kept in separate files, in password-protected online storage, tablets and laptops. Only the research team will have access to these files. All research data will be uploaded and secured in a Canada-based, password-protected, encrypted cloud-based file storage platform in accordance with current privacy regulations. All raw data files will be deleted after ten years, and any paper copies will also be shredded.

Compensation

You will receive an honorarium for each session. You can participate in more than one session. The honorarium is a thank you for the valuable time and information that you are providing, and not a contract or obligation to participate. Other costs such as art materials, cultural gifts and food will be covered by our project. You can still withdraw from the study after your session, and the honoraria and support for costs of materials (art materials, gift, food, etc.) do not need to be reimbursed.

More about this study

This study is conducted under the supervision of Dr. Sandrina Carere, a professor at the School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria. For more information, you can visit our website at kinshiprising.uvic.ca or contact Dr. Carere at scarere@uvic.ca or kinshiprising@uvic.ca. Funding is provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). You can verify the ethical approval of this study by contacting the University of Victoria Human Research Ethics Board at ethics@uvic.ca.

Confirmation of informed consent

Evolving consent means that you consent to participate in this project over time and for more than one session, until you choose to stop participating or the project is completed. You can sign this form digitally, sign and send us a picture, or express your consent in writing, by email or text. You can also provide verbal consent by phone or in person. In providing consent to participate in this study, you consent to the following:

I have read and understand the information in this consent form and have had an opportunity to have my questions answered. I consent to participating in this study over time, and I agree to be contacted to participate in more than one session, until I let the research team know I no longer want to participate.

Appendix B. Research Questions

Personal

- What does community mean to you?
- How does community play a role in your identity?
- How did growing up away from your Indigenous community affect your identity?
Cultural understanding (Romantic, tokenized, racial unawareness, emotionally detached?)
- What is your positionality? How does your positionality factor into your intersectionality?
- What does Indigenous mean to you?
- Are there challenges with being mixed-race?
- Why art-based? Storytelling?

Community

- What does community mean to you?
- What does community look like/ feel like to you?
- Is there an importance for a sense of belonging?
- How is identity important to you? Does identity play a role in community connection?
- Are culture and identity the same?
- What are your experiences or understanding of displaced community members seeking community connection? Cultural connection?
- Are there challenges for displaced/disconnected community members looking for kinship networks?
- Why is Storytelling and Documentation of family stories important?

Elder / Knowledge Keeper

- What is the importance of storytelling? How does it play a role in Skwxwú7mesh Identity?
- What do blankets symbolize?
- How is art used in the community?
- How does documentation of culture play a role in the community? Is it important to document family, community and traditional teachings?