

Honouring Our Journey: Engaging Community in a Good Way

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Background

Transformative community engagement by Canadian public institutions requires commitments to wise practices that consider conceptual principles of decolonization, reconciliation, equitable representation, and relational reciprocity in the co-creation of knowledge. These principles are meaningful to Indigenous peoples and are important among other equity-deserving communities in Canada, including (but not limited to) women, people with disabilities, racialized people, and gender, and sexually diverse people. While each community is unique (including significant diversity within each community), collectively they face challenges associated with inequity, disempowerment, exclusion, and injustice. Simultaneously, public institutions face increasing pressure to address these complex societal issues at the community level.

As many non-Indigenous Canadians seek to stand with Indigenous peoples and communities or as allies to navigate these pressing issues, there is a compelling opportunity to learn from Indigenous wise practices to approach community engagement in a *good way* (University of Calgary, 2017, p. 13). "In a good way" is a concept used by many Indigenous peoples to acknowledge work conducted in authentic and meaningful ways, with intention and sincerity and through reciprocal and respectful relationships (University of Calgary, 2017, p. 13).

Social Purpose

My research can benefit individual community engagement practitioners and the Canadian public institutions they work with who seek wise practices and equitable community engagement approaches to navigate and respond to complex community challenges associated with inequity, disempowerment, exclusion, and injustice.

Situated as a settler woman and good ally among Indigenous communities, my research can enhance awareness and build understanding of Indigenous knowledge systems. By using different theory-building approaches to study disparate issues facing Indigenous and other communities, I hope to foster a more holistic approach to community engagement, stemming from different world views (Gioia & Pitre, 1990).

How can public institutions deepen community engagement through Indigenous wise practices?

As a leader in community engagement and my research through practice, I aim to honour and co-create knowledge about Indigenous engagement in relation to other models of community engagement. I aim to apply evolving and wise practices in community engagement to raise awareness to sensitive, often racialized, societal issues in Canada; including community health and wellbeing, marginalized populations, anti-racism, decolonization, and reconciliation.

Methodological Approach

Reflective of the social constructionism and emergent/holism paradigm, I will employ a pragmatic inquiry approach to conduct multiple case studies exploring how holistic and wise practices developed by, and with, Indigenous peoples can enable community engagement with other communities in Canada.

Through a process of community-based participatory action research (CBPAR) and Indigenous Research Methodologies (IRMs), I aim to shed light, make meaning, and acquire a deeper understanding about Indigenous engagement in relation to other forms of community engagement.

Qualitative Research Methods

Qualitative research helps researchers understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved and "to contextualize issues in their particular socio-economic political milieu, and sometimes to transform social conditions" (Glesne, 2006, p. 4).

- Literature and organizational document review
- Semi-structured interviews
- Sharing circles
- Storytelling
- Descriptive case analysis

Multiple Case Studies

Multiple case studies based on my work with Indigenous communities through my professional practice will enable me to investigate my research topic in a real-life context. All materials will be co-created with the guidance of my Elders:

- Framework for Community Engagement
- Curriculum Design
- Presentation Materials
- Facilitators Guide
- Journal Articles (and other publications)

Decolonizing Community Engagement



Ethical Considerations

Ethics serve as the cornerstone of my research process and journey. Careful consideration of the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (2018) – Chapter 9 is paramount. Additionally, OCAP acknowledges and grants Indigenous communities, groups, and individuals the rights to their own knowledge and ways of sharing. I am committed to co-creating and sharing my research in a good way.

References

Gioia, D. A., & Pitre, E. (1990b). Multiparadigm Perspectives on Theory Building. *The Academy of Management Review*, 15(4), 584. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258683>

Glesne, C. (2006). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers*. Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

University of Calgary. (2017). *Indigenous Strategy ii'taa' pah' to'p Together in a Good Way: A Journey of Transformation and Renewal*. Calgary, Alberta.