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DEFYING COLONIAL LANGUAGE AND RECLAIMING PERSONAL STORIES: INDIGENOUS AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AND TRUTH TELLING

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Abstract. Indigenous Peoples have a long-standing tradition of storytelling since our ancestors told our first stories. Though strides have been made in academia, challenges continue to make it difficult to carry and pass on knowledge through our original ways of knowing. This paper expands on "truth telling," exposes colonial autoethnographic language, and reclaims personal story through Indigenous autoethnography. Further, it critically examines consent in the Tri-Council Policy Statement, as it may prevent marginalized peoples from speaking their truths through their own respective stories.

Keywords. Indigenous autoethnography; language; decolonization; reclamation; truth-telling; story

1. Positionality Statement

A common thread is woven among and within all Indigenous communities. We all share collective histories, truths, songs, ceremonies, and draw from our respective nations through story to support future generations in various shapes and forms. I am a part of this thread. Lyn ndishnikaaz. Sagamok Anishnawbek ndoonjibaa. Anishnawbe'Kwe. Migizi N'dodem. My name is Lyn. I come from Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation. I am an Anishinaabe woman (descended from Ojibway bloodlines), Eagle Clan. As an Anishinaabe'Kwe, I recognize that the importance of story is embedded in teachings I have acquired from familial relations, community members, and Elders. My doctoral research included this element, which relied on the significance of truth telling and personal story and as a result exposed unsettling challenges. Notably, this paper will further the persistence of acceptable colonial language in autoethnography (based on storytelling), the need for Indigenous autoethnography (reclamation of personal story in the academy), consent through the academy (Tri-Council Policy Statement) in relation to truth telling and whose stories are allowed to be told and on whose

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terms. Story and truth telling have shaped and created Indigenous Peoples' lived realities and envisioned futures since time immemorial. This happens when we weave our threads into the academy and beyond.

2. Introduction

> "The Indigenous peoples' story and truth has been absent for too long now"
>
> (Absolon and Absolon-Winchester, 2016, p. 4)

Debwewin is an Anishinaabe word often translated to English as "truth." In a more precise interpretation, Leeanne Betasamosake Simpson (2014) notes that it is derived from *(o)debwewin* and literally means "the sound of the heart" (p. 108). Therefore, to prevent our stories being told is to deny the very sound of our hearts. Conversely, to Indigenous peoples, our Debwewin is empowering.

The Anishinaabeg understand Debwewin as intrinsically linked to our understandings of living among all creation. Gitchi Manidoo (the Great Spirit) first provided the Anishinaabeg this gift in the form of the Seven Grandfather Teachings or Seven Sacred Teachings, which were intended to nurture Anishinaabeg ways of knowing and being in the physical world. Those seven guiding principles are wisdom, love, respect, bravery, humility, honesty, and truth (Benton-Banai, 1988). Significantly, Edward Benton-Banai (1988) states that "Debwewin-Truth: Truth is to know all of these things" (p. 64); therefore, the six other sacred teachings are upheld and honoured within Debwewin. Moreover, it is important to fully acknowledge that for the Anishinaabeg, truth goes beyond simply not being misleading or deceitful.

Debwewin, as situated in an educational context, is not only necessary in the present day but also to tell truths on historical educational institutions in Canada from an Indigenous perspective. More specifically, residential schools operated under the management of government officials guiding policies, alongside colonial and church-based educators implementing a forced assimilative agenda (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada [TRC], 2015). This was a key factor in the government's plan to eliminate Indigenous cultures across Turtle Island and impose a one-sided Western narrative. Rice et al. (2022) assert that in order to confront colonial attitudes, we must attend to "Indigenous approaches [that] center relationships and seek to disrupt white settler power/privilege, in part, by speaking Indigenous truth to settler-colonial power" (p. 18). The TRC (2015) similarly notes that "in order for reconciliation to take place the truth must be told" (p. 271); the truth will only be beneficial to and serve our communities if the truth is heard. It is equally important to recognize who is speaking as it is to know who is listening, if indeed anyone listening.

D. H. Martin (2012) states that "Canada's education system has established a 'truth' about its past that fundamentally ignores Indigenous perspectives" (p. 24). As such, there is an urgent need for story combined with Debwewin to recreate a narrative in educational arenas that tells our truth and makes space for *our*

history. Thus, the phrase "truth telling" (British Columbia Treaty Commission, 2000; TRC, 2015) has become familiar in many circles involving Indigenous Peoples, especially in calling for social and ethical responses to the many injustices involving the whole Indigenous populace and telling our own stories.

3. Autoethnography

> "I think of an autoethnographer, first, as a storyteller"
>
> (Arthur Bochner, as cited in Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2014, 20:57)

Autoethnography relies on story, as noted above by Arthur Bochner, a leader in this field. In "Autoethnography: An Overview," Bochner and his collaborators deconstruct the term as "an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) in order to understand cultural experience (*ethno*)" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 273). An autoethnographic approach in academia seemingly allows everyone to include their personal story, which also lends itself to Indigenous ways of learning and meaningful ways of gathering data. Autoethnography has roots in ethnography and anthropology (Chang, 2008; Ellis et al., 2011); historically, ethnography and anthropology have described other cultures predominantly from an outsider perspective, such as early research on Indigenous Peoples on Turtle Island. However, Chang (2008) emphasizes that autoethnography can assume an "insider" perspective despite its roots in anthropology, as it "shares the storytelling feature with other genres of self-narrative but transcends mere narration of self to engage in cultural analysis and interpretation" (p. 43), thus placing the self both in a social context and at the center of analysis.

Autoethnography developed across many disciplines under the umbrella of qualitative research during the 1990s, using self-reflection and personal experience to augment cultural meanings and interpretations (Adams et al., 2017). It offers an avenue to situate an Indigenous perspective in broader academic spaces through a methodology that is inclusive of different backgrounds and promotes a diverse view of acquiring and applying knowledge. This method embraces elements of story and culture in different contexts. Ellis et al. (2011) find that "scholars began recognizing that different kinds of people possess different assumptions about the world—a multitude of ways of speaking, writing, valuing and believing" (p. 275), while Ellis and Bochner (2000) acknowledge that using one's own narrative can be a "source of empowerment and a form of resistance to counter the dominant" (p. 749) within prevailing ideologies and worldviews. In the *Handbook of Autoethnography*, Holman Jones et al. (2015) outline key features of autoethnographic research:

> While all personal writing could be considered examinations of culture, not all personal writing is autoethnographic; there are additional characteristics that distinguish autoethnography from

> other kinds of personal work. These include (1) *purposefully commenting on/critiquing of culture and cultural practices*, (2) *making contributions to existing research*, (3) *embracing vulnerability with purpose*, and (4) *creating a reciprocal relationship with audiences in order to compel a response.*
>
> (p. 22, italics original)

An autoethnographic approach could complement and integrate Indigenous perspectives in academia under the above criteria. As Chang (2016) notes, "Autoethnogaphers carefully examine how they have interacted with other people within their socio-cultural contexts and how social forces have influenced their lived experiences" (p. 107). Thus, there is a possible option to locate oneself as an Indigenous person navigating Western academics and society.

It is important to acknowledge a phrase that changed how I thought of autoethnography from Holman Jones et al. (2015)—"without going 'native'" (p. 34)—which leapt from the pages. Although those authors provide informative content on how to conceptualize and relate lived moments amid the complexities and responsibilities of writing from an insider perspective, the idiom "going 'native'" stayed with me. They brought to mind O'Reilly's (2009) assessment of the idiom "as a derogatory or offensive term, associated with the language and attitudes of colonial ethnography" and that "the very language of 'native', ... respondent, or informant implies the 'othering' of the anthropological gaze" (p. 2). Métis scholar Zoe Todd (2016), responding to the same term used in a different setting, exclaimed "Going native! What hubris!" (p. 10). Todd noted the desensitization that occurs when such terms are used "without anyone questioning their impact on the few Indigenous scholars" (pp. 10–11) and how critics may be told to "lighten up" (p. 11) if they do raise any concerns. Consequently, the term "going native" does not have to possess overt racial implications in any context in which it is used, but *intention* is not the same as *impact*. Although Holman Jones et al. (2015) may not have intended to offend any of their readers, I felt the ripple effects—that is, the impact—of insensitive language.

I no longer feel comfortable using a methodology that subscribes to deploying colonial language without explanation, or that fails to acknowledge that certain common expressions are either no longer acceptable or, at least, should be viewed as objectionable. As my work is filtered through a decolonial lens, I feel it necessary to respond in a way that seeks to honour the histories, present, and futures of Indigenous peoples and encourages an Indigenous perspective in academia: Indigenous autoethnography.

4. Indigenous Autoethnography

> "To Elders only those who have experienced an event are empowered to speak about it. embrace first voice as methodology. Only those who are Aboriginal can speak about being Aboriginal"
>
> (Graveline, 2000, p. 362)

Indigenous autoethnography is a methodology that encapsulates the above quote and breathes life into Graveline's words—inhaling renewed energy in knowing that we do not have to rely on another's culture to speak our lived experience(s) and exhaling an autonomous sovereign self. Indigenous scholar Paul Whitinui (2014) reminds Indigenous peoples that we need to

> recenter our culture from "within" as opposed to relying solely on "externally codified" forms of knowledge that are often devoid of our own ways of knowing and doing. The journey is "deeply necessary" toward enabling an individual to spend time reflecting on their own cultural intellectual wisdom and to support individuals to recalibrate ones' one's own inner as well as collective cultural potential.(p. 460)

Self-reflecting and understanding inherent knowledge systems are crucial parts of the process of contributing to the resurgence and revival of Indigenous nations. Whitinui (2014) redefines and deconstructs the term autoethnography, stating that it "draws together self (auto), *ethno (nation)*, and graphy (writing) ... as a way of (re)claiming, (re)storing, (re)writing, and (re)patriating our own lived realities as Indigenous peoples" (p. 467; emphasis added). This is significant as Indigenous peoples often have been grouped together as a single, homogenous cultural group, which in turn supported the notion there is a single Indigenous worldview. This misconception is far from true. In Canada alone, "there are 634 First Nation communities ... which represent more than 50 Nations and 50 Indigenous languages" (Indigenous Services Canada, 2020, p. 11), each with its own geographical and local traditions, teachings, and knowledge.

Moreover, "Indigenous autoethnography differs from autoethnography by centering Indigenous axiologies, ontologies and epistemologies" (Bishop, 2021, p. 368). Indigenous autoethnography is a culturally informed methodology that addresses decolonization on various levels, involving research that is culturally driven, emancipatory, and is based on reclamation and resistance. It also values inner knowing, counters colonial violence, and recognizes the significance of our very presence, allowing for individual and collective self-determination over our Indigenous bodies and stories (Bishop, 2021; Francis & Munson, 2017; Tynan & Bishop, 2019; Whitinui, 2014). In using this methodology, I can speak directly from the perspective of an Ojibway-Anishinaabe researcher and educator, drawing on the power residing in my own voice and my nation's teachings to give back to, support, and uphold other Indigenous peoples.

4.1. **Culturally Driven Research: Purposefully Walking in Two Worlds.** Indigenous autoethnography is culturally driven and aims to honour Indigenous nations' different histories, stories, and identities by interpreting and engaging with *ethnos as nation*. Using this definition acknowledges that Indigenous peoples should all be seen and heard in the wider society (including academic scholarship) and helps counter the notion of a single Indigenous worldview. Unpacking the term nation and not relying upon the stand-alone qualifier Indigenous is meaningful, as the latter term reflects many original peoples and their descendants from

pre-colonial societies across Mother Earth. Indigenous Services Canada (2020) notes that "'Indigenous peoples' is a collective name for the original peoples of North America [Turtle Island]" (p. 9) and delineates Indigenous peoples specifically residing in Canada into three groups: First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. Yet, although I am labelled First Nation under these categories, I am also an Anishinaabe woman from Sagamok Anishnawbek First Nation, and "Sagamok's culture and language is Anishinabek and is made up of the Ojibwe [Ojibway], Odawa and Pottawatomi tribes. Also known as the Three Fires Peoples" (Toulouse, n.d., para. 2). As an Anishinaabe descendant of the Three Fires Peoples, my lineage stems from Ojibway bloodlines. Essentially, I am more than "Indigenous," as my roots and ancestral footprints on this land are more consequential and profound than what can be captured by a mere umbrella term. Naming nations matters, and my whole cultural location as an Ojibway-Anishinaabe person informs my position in academia, my research, and my life.

Over the years, several education scholars have sought to recognize and explore the disparate worldviews and perspectives of Indigenous and Westernized belief systems. The term *walking in two worlds* is still commonly used in Indigenous scholarship to describe and analyze Indigenous experiences associated with research and education. The expression is based on the realities of Indigenous students and scholars living with different perspectives and traditional teachings while attending, teaching in, and conducting research in the academy. Wilson (2008) expresses the importance of Indigenous scholars "walking" in their natural world in the academy because "an integral part of Indigenous identity for many Indigenous people includes a distinct way of viewing the world and of 'being'" (p. 15). Indigenous autoethnography thus enables a distinctive perspective—a way of knowing and being that is imperative to providing a comprehensive and complete story of each nation.

4.2. **Decolonizing and Emancipatory Research.** Decolonizing research practices recognizes and involves an "intersection between emancipatory and Indigenous methodologies" (Kovach, 2015, p. 46), including Indigenous autoethnography. Bishop (2021) describes Indigenous autoethnography as "a distinct, and decolonising, approach to research/researching" (p. 368) that roots itself in the power of one's own story, contributing to a greater collective narrative of colonized peoples. Further, Indigenous autoethnography asks both author and reader (Indigenous or non-Indigenous) to question the meaning and significance of writing inside and outside the colonial structures embedded within educational spaces. As Chawla and Atay (2018) observe, there is a "need to think about postcolonial work's veritable absence and scarce representation in the field of autoethnography," because otherwise individuals from oppressed groups become a "subject of color destined to stay on the periphery of conversations in a cutting-edge genre and method that claimed to re-center the subject" (p. 3). Despite autoethnography's original intent to open academic and scholarly spaces to diverse experiences and stories, Chawla and Atay (2018) also hold that "academic publishing within this tradition remains limited to the White majority" (p. 4). Using a decolonizing autoethnographic approach "has the potential to reframe autoethnography

by encouraging it to break away from the dominance of Western and U.S.-centric ways of narrating life-worlds" (p. 4), creating more space for colonized and underrepresented peoples to speak their truth and express their lived experience.

"Indigenous autoethnography 'flips the gaze,' exposing systems and structures of power, challenging the dominance of colonial narratives ... done through an emancipatory lens" (Tynan & Bishop, 2019, p. 222) and housed in an Indigenous research paradigm. Noel (2016) notes that emancipatory research encompasses "multiple realities, and that research is not only created by the 'dominant or elite researcher'" (p. 1), adding that emancipatory research's "key aim is to empower its research subjects" (p. 3) while critiquing social and educational environments. Maori scholar Colleen McMurchy-Pilkington (2008) also addresses the possibilities of emancipatory research, describing it as a process happening at many levels simultaneously and defining emancipation as "a journey traveled by oppressed groups" (p. 614). Marginalized people need to be freed (including in an educational context) from primarily seeing and hearing a one-sided Western narrative; in short, they must experience "emancipation from hearing only the voices of Western Europe, emancipation from generations of silence, and emancipation from seeing the world in one color" (Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 125). Personal narratives emerging through Indigenous autoethnography can challenge binaries in the academy that privilege some and simultaneously disadvantage others.

4.3. **Reclamation and Resistance.** Historically, Indigenous knowledge has been overlooked, deemed inferior, and even bluntly rejected in Canadian education systems (Battiste, 2013; Smith, 1999). Indigenous autoethnography's process, product, and purpose is to reclaim that same excluded knowledge from our respective nations' standpoint and resist hegemonic discourse in academia by countering it with personal narratives (Francis & Munson, 2017; Whitinui, 2014). According to Francis and Munson (2017), personal narratives are both emboldening and crucial, as Western society continues to support "an academic system that perpetuates the control and limitation of Indigenous narrative in order to reinforce the Western settler-colonial framework" (p. 48). Indigenous narratives are acts of resistance—pushing boundaries and establishing liminal spaces through story. Further, Whitinui (2014) explains the value of "enacting a resistance counterhegemonic discourse that enables indigenous peoples to narrate our own storied lives and as it pertains to restoring a cultural balance with others" (p. 469), which is needed if we are to make space for and reclaim voices from often underrepresented and even silenced lives.

As an element of my own dibaajimowin (story), I purposefully insert words in Anishinaabemowin (the language of the Anishnawbeg) as an act of reclaiming my voice and language in my own life as an Anishinaabe woman. I remember Anishinaabemowin always being spoken by both my parents at home when I was a little girl. I also remember that they did not speak it anywhere else, nor did either of my parents encourage we children to speak our original language. I can only speculate that from their own experience in residential schools, they perceived the world as a dangerous place for fluent Anishinaabeg speakers and did

not want their children to suffer from the same discriminatory practices. When I began school at age five, Anishinaabemowin slowly started to fade, and though I have always carried the language to some degree, there were years at a time when I did not speak it at all. I realized this when I was carrying my son and decided to revisit my first language and reclaim it in all aspects of my life; hence, I feel this must also be an ongoing aspect of my academic experience—the reclamation of my voice and language as active living resistance.

4.4. **Honouring Inner Knowing—Self and Liberation.** A methodology that employs resistance and reclaims qualities through a decolonial lens offers Indigenous peoples from all nations a way to honour original teachings and advance liberation on any number of levels. As Whitinui (2014) puts it,

> grounded within a resistance-based discourse, indigenous autoethnography aims to address issues of social justice and to develop social change by engaging indigenous researchers in rediscovering their own voices as "culturally liberating human-beings." Implicit in this process is also the desire to ground one's sense of "self" in what remains "sacred" to us as indigenous peoples in the world we live, and in the way we choose to construct our identity. (p. 456)

Indigenous autoethnography allows me to be grounded in research and writing through openly bringing my nation's teachings, honouring all relations (including the non-human and spirit realms), being mindful of relational accountability (Wilson, 2008), and adhering to proper protocol in terms of community engagement, all of which is an effort to honour Anishinaabe wisdom, spirituality, and the sacredness of my own spirit and self. The "self" is representative of one's own value, gifts, and place in the world. Having this understanding helps me (and others) give back to Indigenous communities in a good way. Anishinaabe scholar Kathleen Absolon (2011) acknowledges the significance of self:

> The self is central to Indigenous research. ... This includes the researcher's location, memory, motive and search for congruency. What we see revealed through Indigenous re-search is the re-searcher, the self. Within the self exists millennia of Indigenous ancestral knowledge, teachings and Spirit. (p. 67)

It must also be noted that while the Anishinaabeg honour each person's spirit, we are also cognizant that we do not stand alone in self, as we believe that we carry our ancestors' memories, live for future generations, and exist in relation to the land and all living entities. Cree scholar Stan Wilson (2001) expresses that "as an Aboriginal person I am constituted by my individual self and by my ancestors and future generations, who will originate in and have returned to the land" (p. 91). I concur with Wilson and believe that we live between seven generations (both before and after) and that our "self" is constantly and continually connected to others, to the non-human, to Mother Earth, and to spirit realms.

For K. Martin and B. Mirraboopa (2003), honouring self "is a process that allows us to work from Aboriginal centers and ensure that we work with relatedness of self and Entities," while "being reflexive ensures we do not compromise our identity whilst undertaking research" (p. 212). Hence, paying heed to our inherent self and spirit ensures that we do not cede our identities, supports our own Debwewin, and applies knowledge that prioritizes an Indigenous worldview. By writing from a place grounded in accumulated Indigenous ancestral knowledge, Indigenous peoples "seek to legitimate our stories through a process of self-determination that is both liberating and empowering" (Whitinui, 2014, p. 465) in Western educational institutions and societies. Ancestral-based knowledge and stories counter colonial impacts, serve as a cultural form of critical awareness, and instill a liberating praxis in the process of doing Indigenous autoethnography.

4.5. **Combatting Colonial Violence Through Presence(ing) and Voice.** Imperialism and colonialism ushered in a violent era for Indigenous peoples and still permeate present-day Indigenous communities and individuals on a wide range of levels. Colonial violence takes many shapes and forms, relentlessly slithering in and out of lives: direct and indirect, intentional and unintentional, economic, political, genocidal, epistemological, spiritual, sexual, psychological, cultural—and even this long list is not exhaustive. Colonialism and Eurocentric constructs (Battiste, 2013; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008) are pervasive in education and have been linked across all disciplines. Recognizing colonial violence as a distinct element in Indigenous autoethnography is necessary, as not all autoethnographers must speak of and respond to colonial violence. As such, "Indigenous autoethnography operates as a decolonising methodology, a distinctness in process and purpose that sets it apart from autoethnography" (Tynan & Bishop, 2019, p. 222). Hence, in areas involving education and research, "Indigenous peoples must respond by reclaiming our own research agendas by repatriating our cultural thinking, knowledge, and knowing" (Whitinui, 2014, p. 472), which is made possible by a culturally explicit Indigenous methodology.

Indigenous research and methodologies continue to gain traction in the academy through an Indigenous presence, "a direct result of generations of generative refusal in the context of a relentless struggle for Indigenous life and freedom, in what is often called Indigenous resurgence" (Simpson, 2018, para. 1). This refusal is aligned with Indigenous peoples' countering colonial violence in the academy and society. Presence or presencing is typical of Indigenous life and freedoms and transcends a mere physical understanding of the term; indeed, the fact that I must discuss a much-needed (physical and metaphysical) presence as an Indigenous person connotes an absence. Oddly enough, in previous years our very absence became our presence, meaning that we were only present in literature, curricula, and the wider society through a non-Indigenous simulation of an "Indian" that was meant to symbolize remnants of a supposedly dying people (Vizenor, 2000). Erroneous information associated with this simulation has made it necessary to inscribe ourselves, as Indigenous people, into education on all levels—both *writing* and *righting* Indigenous lives.

As an Ojibway-Anishinaabe scholar at a Eurocentric university, I share these words that resonate with me: "Presencing is key because when we are present in a colonial context, we are transcending colonial attempts to erase Anishinabek" (Lee, 2011, p. 2); through this presence, Indigenous knowledge and nation-based stories support cultural survivance. Indigenous activist and scholar Jack Forbes (1980) declared that cultural survivance was of utmost importance: "the mind cannot function effectively if it is imprisoned. An intelligentsia cannot exist if the minds of the people are programmed to accept whatever colonialism decrees" (p. 84). These words remain as meaningful today as they were more than 40 years ago. Combating colonial attitudes and reclaiming our traditional knowledge systems in the academy extends itself to greet the next generations on the horizon.

Active presencing means living and breathing in contention with (rather than being consumed by) colonial violence, reclaiming absence and silence, and uncovering voice(s) that have been suppressed. Reclaiming voice has long been an important aspect of Indigenous research methodologies (Graveline, 2000; Smith, 1999; Whitinui, 2014). For Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), "engaging in a discussion about research as an indigenous issue has been about finding a 'voice,' or a way of finding a 'voice,' or a way of voicing concerns" (p. 93) at all levels of scholarship and in all disciplines. Presencing and speaking from nation-based stories can be transformative for Indigenous peoples, individually and collectively, as "My Voice/Our Voices are a Materialization [that] Exernalize our internal Beingness" (Graveline, 2000, p. 362). This statement accords well with Whitinui's (2014) assertion that Indigenous autoethnography combats dominant ideologies by "constructing and materializing a new reality to protect who we are and why we are who we say we are" (p. 465). As Indigenous people, we use this voice personally and communally—both for our selves and for all Indigenous people. What may have started with only a handful of Indigenous voices in the academy is becoming a gathering at the big drum, singing new songs that do not dwell in victimhood or desolation but instead represent bright and clear voices echoing down streets and throughout university hallways across Turtle Island.

5. Truth and Storytelling and the Tri-Council Policy Statement

Indigenous voices through song, ceremony, and story are integral to sustaining our original ways of being and continue to help us navigate new terrains, such as carving paths in the academy. Before colonial agendas disrupted our knowledge systems, stories and the honour of speaking our truths were upheld and the center of our respective Nations. Since then, the need for the phrase *walking in two worlds* has become common in Indigenous scholarship, research, and teaching (Archibald, 2008; Fitzgerald, 2006). This results from Indigenous scholars having to navigate two disparate worldviews and ethics (Ball & Janyst, 2008; Hayward et al., 2021) while making their way in and through the academy. As such, I wonder whether autoethnographic accounts truly honour Indigenous Peoples' story and truth telling when they question accountability in the realm of education. This calls for an examination of "consent" and what it means from a marginalized perspective, as outlined in chapter 3 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS).

The TCPS considers ethical conduct for research involving humans (Panel on Research Ethics, 2022; TCPS 2) aims to uphold and maintain ethical research and is a joint policy from Canada's three federal research agencies (the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada). Essentially, research involving humans (including autoethnography) in Canada must adhere to the statement's policies and procedures. Though I absolutely agree with ethical research and many of the aspects of the statement, I focus on Chapter 3 ("The Consent Process") concerning informed and voluntary participation as it pertains directly to autoethnography and potentially the future of other Indigenous people's personal stories. It is worth discussion because while I did not anticipate having any concerns with established procedural means of protection in research, having gone through the process of writing an autoethnographic account as an Indigenous student I raise one concern: determining the factors involved in and limits of what is told in the academy.

Consent as it applies to Indigenous Peoples in research generally stems from how to collaborate and consult with Indigenous communities to do no harm, as reinforced in Chapter 9, "Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Canada" (TCPS 2); however, what does it mean when we have to ask for consent to express the harms done? In the vein of cultivating respectful and equitable research practices, I revisit consent and relate it to truth telling and accountability that directly influences and impacts my stories and relationships—and those of Indigenous people more generally—in academia. Throughout TCPS 2's Chapter 3, it is made abundantly clear that consent meaning "free, informed and ongoing consent" (Panel on Research Ethics, 2020, p. 31) must be given after providing all information regarding the research itself, participant roles, and the dissemination of the project. To be clear, I am in agreement with the statement that "Under no circumstances may researchers proceed to conduct research with anyone who has refused to participate" (Panel on Research Ethics, 2022, p. 31). However, I realized while writing an autoethnographic account for my dissertation, as both researcher and participant, that if one is writing from marginalized places and is possibly a victim of ongoing harms, what does this mean to your research? How can one tell a story of distress brought about from those in the academy when they hold the determining factors of what and how you can portray them? I worry that our stories may not see the light of day due to these protections of those who do harm.

I cannot imagine anyone in the academy or beyond who had caused harm or distress (knowingly or otherwise) to Indigenous or otherwise marginalized people writing their own autoethnographic accounts would sign consent forms acknowledging these actions. I raise this because by owning (un)intentional actions, people may suffer repercussions and may not want to be held accountable even if they think it will benefit others. Therefore, I question whether, if we can find places of equity and transparency, who (if anyone) will be held accountable? How are we intended to fully disclose areas that may be preventing, in the context of marginalized populaces using autoethnography, people from being successful

when a wholly truthful story may not be able to be told? I do not claim to know these answers but do hope that questioning acts as a provocation to those in the academy to consider power relations that exist within education. Although there are ways of avoiding the disclosure of identities, such as providing a pseudonym, changing gender or age, and carefully fictionalizing accounts, this still changes our story and truth, which is then disguised and managed by the same colonial institutions that make policies to be followed which may keep contributing to acts of structural violence. There needs to be a space where Debwewin can be brought forth and made visible in educational spaces for accountability purposes. Lastly, being mindful and considering truth before reconciliation will also benefit collective educational institutions and those in the academy who work tirelessly to bring about social and equitable change in all areas of research and education.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, Indigenous Peoples telling personal stories resists dominant narratives of and on Indigenous populaces and unsettles Western ideas of what counts as knowledge in academic spaces. Defying colonial language and reclaiming personal story through Indigenous autoethnography makes space to express, tell, and create decolonial narratives that uphold Indigenous ways of knowing and being. Our questioning and stories also provide greater insight through Debwewin and can be representative of our different nations' values, histories, and ways of viewing the world(s) in which we live in to pass on to future generations. Our stories resist colonial agendas and are carried on in song, ceremony, art, research and lived through spirit every day: weaving threads through collective and personal story.

Note: This work originates from my doctoral dissertation. Sections of the text may be comparable to or replicate the original text from my unpublished PhD thesis; the CJIS was aware of this fact at the point of article submission.

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