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# EDITORIAL: WHAT IS INDIGENOUS STUDIES?

LAURA FORSYTHE [1]

Abstract. This editorial addresses the discipline of Indigenous studies and the scholarship that has shaped our current understandings. For the journal's inaugural edition, a grounding of the various theoretical frameworks and methodologies undertaken by scholars working in Indigenous communities is highlighted along with a sharing of the canon which roots Indigenous Studies. The piece, as well as the journal, celebrates the multiple ways of knowing and being while adhering to the call of the discipline to deconstruct, interrogate, expose, and create knowledge.

*Keywords.* Methodology, Axiology, Ontology, Epistemology, Theory, Canon

## 1. Positionality Statements

It is crucial in Indigenous Studies is to begin by locating the researcher's self in relation to practicing a tenant Indigenous worldview (Absolon, 2011; Graveline, 2000; Kovach, 2009, 2015, 2017; McGregor et al., 2018). Through the location of our nations, culture, land, and firsthand experiences, positionality is addressed (Absolon, 2011; Moreton-Robinson, 2017). Kovach (2009) stresses that knowing these details about a researcher makes biases explicit and adds credibility. To start, this paper adheres to both traditional Indigenous ways of being and contemporary Indigenous academic protocol. Following the model to expand beyond myself as a researcher and contextualize the conversation: Laura Forsythe *d-ishinikaashon* (my name); *ma parenti* Ward, Berard, Morin *pi* Cyr (my ancestors); *ma famii kawyesh Rooster town d-oshciwak* (my community); Manitoba Métis Federation (my nation).

## 2. Introduction

Acknowledging the diversity amongst the multiple nations and ways of knowing incorporated into Indigenous Studies as a discipline reveals the need for the expression of multiples when speaking to knowledges and epistemologies (Million, 2015). The problematic nature of the very term "Indigenous" is discussed

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* Corresponding author Laura Forsythe

by Smith (1999), as it seeks to collectivize numerous Indigenous nations under one umbrella. By contrast, there is a stress on plurality throughout Indigenous Studies (McGregor et al., 2018; Walter & Andersen, 2013). Indigenous Studies and the approaches to "research [are] as complex and multiple as Indigenous people themselves" (Evans et al., 2014, p. 179). Thus, the complexities, multiplicity, and contention that pervade the discipline permit no absolutes. The *Canadian Journal of Indigenous Studies* will embrace and celebrate the multiple ways of knowing and being seen in scholarship throughout the world in Indigenous community. The following editorial will review the research paradigm, methodology, theory and the role of Indigenous Studies.

## 3. Research paradigm

The foundations of Indigenous Studies were established alongside a four-point shift in the Western research paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The institution in the twentieth century followed the positivist research paradigm, which insists on one true reality and thus objectified and universally marginalized Indigenous people (Kovach, 2009, 2017; Wilson, 2008). Under this paradigm, Indigenous people became "suspicious" (Walter & Suina, 2019, p. 234) and distrusted research (L. Smith, 1999). A shift to post-positivism continued the paradigm of one reality but began to acknowledge the imperfect researcher (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). With post-positivism, Indigenous people were "subjected to indignity" (Denzin et al., 2008, p. 8), and research remained under a colonial power (Battiste & Henderson, 2000).

Over time, thanks to a decolonizing perspective, a critical paradigm emerged that admitted reality to be fluid and acknowledged the influence that researchers have over both their inquiries and their subjects (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). The shift to critical paradigms opened scholarship to decolonizing works (Fanon, 1963/1965; Memmi, 1965; Said, 1979) and challenged homogenized dichotomies (Hill, 2015). However, critical theory fails to acknowledge Indigenous epistemologies as "sites of resistance and empowerment" (Denzin et al., 2008, p. 9). Ray (2012) expresses caution about using Western knowledge systems, as they confine Indigenous research within colonial frameworks.

These shifts have led to today's research paradigms using Indigenous epistemologies through constructivism, whose narrative rejects objectivist viewpoints (Kovach, 2009).Constructivism introduces the ontology of fluidity and the reality of numerous concurrent realities specific to peoplehood through the need to be freed from Western traditions (Wilson, 2008). Indigenous scholars like Smith (1999; see also Smith et al., 2016), Walter and Andersen (2013), and Walter and Suina (2019) argue that, despite its growth within Western research paradigms, Indigenous methodology remains separate and not derivative of Western methodologies thanks to the Indigenous epistemologies that underpin the discipline. The shift to an Indigenous research paradigm does not imply that Indigenous research is still in its infancy; it has existed for thousands of years but has only become recognized by the Western academy of late (McGregor et al., 2019; Wilson, 2008).

## 4. Methodology

Smith (1999) offers a simple description of method and methodology: the former provides the tools (ceremony, protocol, sharing circle), and the latter frames questions, shapes analyses, and determines instruments. Conceptualized as a higher-order system, methodology affects the selection of methods (Evans et al., 2014). Indigenous research methods that use surveys, archives, focus groups, and interviews are distinct not because of their method "but because of the theories which guide them" (Windchief & San Pedro, 2019, p. xii).

Indigenous methodologies provide Indigenous Studies with a dynamic and fluid approach that employs alternative ways of thinking about research (Louis, 2007). Three methodologies demonstrate the difference between Western and Indigenous outlooks. In quantitative research, Nayri Kati privileges Indigenous voices, balks at the Western value system, and takes a strength- based approach to statistical data (Walter & Andersen 2013). With a qualitative research approach, Indigenist research methodology privileges Indigenous voices, resistance, and political integrity (Rigney, 1999). Finally, an insurgent research methodology is grounded in Indigenous worldviews and is action-oriented, providing the community with final authority (Gaudry, 2011). Research using Indigenous methodologies draws on Western research traditions in the pursuit of knowledge in Indigenous Studies; however, scholars stress that those traditions are combined with Indigenous epistemology, axiology, and ontology (Kovach, 2009, 2015, 2017; O'Brien, 2017; Smith, 1999, Walter & Andersen, 2013).

4.1. **Epistemology.** Kovach (2009) asserts that tribal epistemology is the system of knowledge production, indicating that in Nêhiyaw tradition, knowledge creation is to be shared with the community. Wilson (2008) holds that "knowledge cannot be owned or discovered but [is] merely a set of relationships that may be given visible form" (p. 27), questioning the concept of creation by using Kovach's (2009) notion of producing. In Indigenous Studies, a debate that cautions against the full adoption of Indigenous epistemologies due to their inability to capture pre- contact Indigenous epistemology because of fragmentation of that knowledge erupted with Gone (2019), who questioned their fullness and suitability for university-based knowledge production.

Regardless of their views on this debate, scholars in Indigenous Studies share a fundamental belief fostered by the multiple perspectives and worldviews within the discipline: the concept of Indigenous knowledges is prioritized and developed within cultural and social frameworks (St. Denis, 2007; Walter & Andersen, 2013). Evans et al.'s (2014) work indicates that Indigenous people determine, control, and develop epistemological trajectories regardless of fragmentation; these scholars argue that epistemology underpins Indigenous methodology, creating a pattern from research.

Million (2016) assigns epistemology the ability to distinguish opinion from justified belief through investigation. Decades ago, Cook-Lynn (1997) challenged Indigenous Studies to seek autonomy from other Western epistemologies, which

they view as "opportunistic" (p. 27) by focusing on the preservation of language and social systems through Indigenous epistemology's ability to protect and preserve. LaRocque (2010, as cited in Eigenbrod, 2010) demands that Indigenous Studies scholars have "an Aboriginal epistemological ethos in addition to their Western academic training and credentials" (p. 11).

4.2. **Ontology.** The formalization of Indigenous knowledges, Indigenous studies, and Indigenous perspectives within the academy means that the ontological ground is shifting (Phillips et al., 2007). Walter & Andersen (2013) describe ontology as the categories used to explain the world around us and our nature of being (p. 46). Ontology follows the logic of cultural beings and includes "who we are and whom we claim to be, who claims us and how we are connected to the land" (Moreton-Robinson, 2017, p. 71). Ways of being are celebrated in the work of Kovach (2009) in Nêhiyaw and Simpson (2011) in the Anishinaabeg tradition, demonstrating the variety of Indigenous Studies practices using an ontological framework. Through a constructivist research paradigm, according to Wilson (2008), "there may be multiple realities" (p. 73) within Indigenous research ontology. Acknowledgment of this point in any discussion of ontology is essential, although similarities across nations and Indigenous worldviews surely do exist.

Relationality is foundational within ontology (Wilson, 2008). Windchief and San Pedro (2019) underline the need for the community to identify their ontology through their connections with their cosmos, environment, and language, thus emphasizing validity and accountability. O'Brien (2017) asserts that this worldview is contained in the language's lending itself to the ontology of Indigenous methodologies, as language provides a window into Indigenous perspective. The Indigenous worldview is tied to language and therefore informs Indigenous epistemologies (Basso, 1996; Kidwell, 2009; Kovach, 2009; McGregor et al., 2018; Simpson, 2011; Simpson & Smith, 2014).

4.3. **Axiology.** Axiology in Indigenous Studies methodologies encompasses relational accountability (Wilson, 2008). It is the set of ethics or morals in a research paradigm that guides the process (Wilson, 2001). Indigenous Studies "pertains to living breathing people, and what is written carries real consequences for the subjects of research" (O'Brien, 2017, p. 19). Therefore, research in the field must be carried out ethically. Indigenous Studies privileges ethics (Kulchyski, 2000), and its demand for adherence to community standards beyond the personal beliefs of the individual researcher (Kovach, 2017) sets it apart in academia. Gaudry (2011, 2015) argues that ethical research upholds those standards by relying on community involvement from development to final validity (p. 251).

Indigenous Studies seeks to improve the lived experience of Indigenous people (Wilson, 2008) while approaching research from an Indigenous perspective in an ethical fashion (Louis, 2007; Nakamura, 2010, Porsanger, 2004). Approaching research through culturally informed ethics for Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers in Indigenous Studies or Indigenous research guides a dialogue that enhances the intersectionality of worldviews (Evans et al., 2014). An "ethical guide" (Archibald, 2008, p. 36) shapes the research through respect for the

community and for those who share knowledge. Smith (1999) and colleagues (2016) state that researchers from both inside and outside the community must practice ethical, reflexive, and respectful research that employs the methodology of Indigenous Studies, making it distinctive in Western institutions.

## 5. The R's

In the past three decades, scholars have theorized Indigenous Studies methodologies using a series of R's. The four Rs originally theorized by Cree scholar Verna Kirkness and Ray Barnhardt (1991): respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility for decades have been theorized and added to by scholars in Indigenous studies. Wilson (2008) stressed the need for healthy relationships attained through adherence to three R's: respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. Scholars like Gone (2019) who hold dissenting views on Indigenous methodologies, agree on the need for respect, engagement, and the nature of service within the discipline. Archibald (2008) added the fifth sentiment of reverence. In contemporary Indigenous Studies, sentiment aligns with the five R's discussed in McGregor et al. (2018): relationship, respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. Their *Indigenous research: Theories, practices, and relationships* (2018) reads as an homage to the work over the past three decades to find and refine the five R's and the addition of Simpson's (2007) concept of refusal. Moreton-Robinson (2017) argues that generosity and obligation are needed alongside the Rs. Other scholars have written about the inclusion of additional Rs, including resurgence (Gaudry, 2011). Through its methodologies, Indigenous Studies as a discipline must uphold the responsibilities of the researcher, ensure that research is relevant to the community and serves it with reciprocity, demonstrate respect through humility, grant sovereignty to the community through a right of refusal, and thrive through relationship (Archibald, 2008; Kovach, 2009; McGregor et al., 2018; Moreton-Robinson, 2017; Warrior, 2014; Wilson, 2008).

5.1. **Relationality.** Indigenous knowledge systems explain the relationships between all life forms in the world (Deloria, 1969; Kovach, 2009; Windchief & San Pedro, 2019). Relationality shapes and supports Indigenous research by providing an epistemic and interpretive scaffolding system (Moreton-Robinson, 2017). Grounded in a conceptualization of interconnectedness, relationality threads its way through epistemology, holism, and story (Moreton- Robinson, 2017). Holism is evoked by story (Kovach, 2009) and therefore wound into Indigenous methodologies. Through story, interconnectedness as an Indigenous philosophical approach to research is realized (Archibald, 2008). Story respects and honours both community and individual (Archibald, 2008), while holism within story as an Indigenous tenant epistemology equalizes asymmetries through animated relationality (Ortiz, 2007, as cited in Kovach, 2017).

5.2. **Story.** Smith (1999), in an integral methodological text, places storytelling at the forefront of Indigenous research, echoing Indigenous knowledges since time immemorial. Smith (2012) cites Kovach (2009), who states that "story is both method and meaning" (p. 145), thus reinforcing the centrality of the concept of

story in Indigenous research. As a frame for research, Archibald (2008) states that storywork engages the researcher in a respectful relationship built on trust; Kovach (2009) agrees, insisting that story inquiry must be based on a relational approach to research. The living story produces conceptual maps of our ways of being and thus dictates Indigenous epistemology (Million, 2016). For King (2003), storytelling as a methodology provides techniques for histography, which is supported by Kovach's (2009) assertion research, which values contextualized knowledge within its methodology practices. Through the use of story in Indigenous Studies, we see the variety of nations and peoples that the research represents; as Kovach (2009) puts it, story as a method provides the frame to witness our differences.

Kulchyski (2000) defines Indigenous Studies as a practice of storytelling, which is buoyed by Eigenbrod's (2010) view that story is the very basis of the discipline. Indigenous research methods seek to be congruent methodologically with tribal knowledge, and story actualizes this desire (Kovach, 2009). Brant (1994) stresses that Indigenous Studies offers a "new way to tell the stories we have always told" (p. 6). As a discipline, Indigenous Studies has been given the responsibility to share the lived experiences of Indigenous populations through both quantitative and qualitative research, so "the process of telling the story is as much the point as the story itself" (Absolon & Willett, 2005, as cited in McGregor et al., 2018). Kovach's (2017) work maintains that story builds community, expresses value, and demonstrates Indigenous research's relational and reflexive nature, all while adhering to protocol.

5.3. **Protocol.** Archibald's (2008) assertion of the need to acknowledge and follow the varied protocols established by ancient Indigenous traditions has been incorporated into the discipline, and these protocols are to be followed when researching in the community (Wilson, 2008). As part of Indigenous epistemologies, protocols guide the relationships between the research, place, spirit, and community (Million, 2010). Crucially, protocols should provide Indigenous communities with a "mechanism for control over research" (Kovach, 2017, p. 225). Smith (1999) supports this concept by noting that research enables a "community to make its own definitions" (p. 125). Kovach contends that protocols as research methodology provide a framework through the creation of concrete actions that serve as a guideline to uphold relationships, again stressing the importance within Indigenous Studies of adhering to protocols to protect the value of relationality (Kovach, 2009, 2017; Simpson, 2007; Wilson, 2008).

## 6. Theoretical approaches in Indigenous Studies

Having explored the multi-faceted nature of Indigenous methodology, ontology, and epistemology that draws on the varied ways of knowing among Indigenous peoples, the wide array of theories used in Indigenous Studies should come as no surprise. Indigenous Studies uses multiple forms of theory as an assertion of sovereignty because "native peoples are situated as those who can be theorized about, but not those that can theorize" (Simpson & Smith, 2014). Million (2014)

positions theory as a verb that questions and reformulates the Indigenous experience. In this second section, postcolonial, critical, feminist, queer, Marxist, and Indigenous theories are discussed as they pertain to and inform Indigenous research.

6.1. **Postcolonial.** For decades, there has been a debate between Indigenous scholars on the use of postcolonial theory in Indigenous Studies. Smith (1999) highlights Australian activist Bobbi Sykes's comment: "What? Post-colonialism? Have they left?" (p. 25). Cook-Lynn (1997) supports Sykes by stating that postcolonial theories project a false reality where Indigenous people are no longer "trapped under the vise of 20th century colonialism" (p. 13). Pulitano (2003) argues that Indigenous theory operates alongside continuing colonialism and identifies the failures of postcolonial theory through its work. Smith (1999) and colleagues (2016) argue that the use of postcolonial theories allows non-indigenous scholars the privilege of continuing to write, leaving out Indigenous ways of knowing and ignoring Indigenous concerns. Byrd (2011) calls post-colonial theories "verbote" (p. xxxii) due to their not yet being not realized and unforeseen in the future. Teaiwa (2002, as cited in Byrd, 2011) claims that a postcolonial perspective "abandons the Native" (p. xxxii). More recently, Cook-Lynn (2012) described Indigenous scholars using postcolonial theories as "relentless optimistic(s) [sic]" (p. 74) warning that the challenge for Indigenous theory is to resist the allure of scholarship that has been configured by one's opponent.

As an alternative, LaRocque (2010) insists that the use of postcolonial theory does not automatically signify that colonialism is over. Simpson and Smith (2014) address the need for postcolonial analysis to be central due to the impossibility in Indigenous Studies of Indigenous communities' regaining their pre-colonial existence (p. 14). Many Indigenous Studies scholars are engaging the decolonization work of Franz Fanon, including Byrd (2011), who analyzes the debate over the use of postcolonial theory and supports engagement to ascertain the issue of disappearing Indigeneity, which lends itself to Fanon's (1963/1965) discussion. Simpson and Smith (2014) celebrate Byrd's assertion that close reading and contextualizing postcolonial theory reveal how Indigenous ways of knowing appear in the literature. Pulitano (2003) also holds that—despite the ideological, geopolitical, and historical differences between postcolonial and Indigenous theories—they are able to speak to one another.

6.2. **Critical theory.** Indigenous Studies as a discipline is home to many critical theorists who use their work to liberate Indigenous experience and knowledges. For example, Rigney (1999) describes critical theory's function as reducing the control that domination, oppression, powerlessness, and the like have on society. Wilson (2001) explains that this function is possible because of the perspective critical theorists adopt regarding reality; although influenced by culture, sex, and social class, reality is fluid and can be changed. Foley (2003) states that critical theory encourages self-reflection of repressive ideologies and challenges inherited (and often unexamined) restrictions on research. In a doctoral thesis, Settee (2007) speaks to the capacity of critical theory as a map to demonstrate how

the relationships between culture, powers, and domination can be used as tools to illuminate complex issues. Byrd (2011) celebrates critical theory's ability to identify the processes oppressing Indigenous people in "colonialism and its past" (p. xxiv).

6.3. **Feminist Theory.** Unlike other theoretical perspectives, the debate in Indigenous feminist theory appears to revolve around the inclusion or exclusion of Indigenous thought within feminist theory, which has prompted the creation of Indigenous feminist theories and the adaptation of existing theories to meet the needs of Indigenous scholars. It is crucial to recognize that Indigenous feminist theory is not merely a "multicultural add on to white feminist theory" (Simpson & Smith, 2014, p. 17). Green (2007) states that Indigenous feminism contributes to democratic development and citizenship in society by educating movements about racism, sexism, and colonialism and building consciousness through solidarity. Simpson and Smith (2014) note that, until recently, the belief that feminism and queer theory were unneeded in the building of Indigenous Studies was justified by the rationale that "homophobia and sexism did not exist prior to colonialism" (p. 16). Many works focusing on Indigenous women have emerged since those days, moving beyond the subject of analysis by using Indigenous feminist theory, which challenges Marxist, postcolonial, and ethnic studies theories.

Million (2009) speaks to gatekeepers in academia who seek to prevent Indigenous feminist theory from being accepted or included. Felt theory, which creates a more complicated telling of the lived experience of Indigenous women, is one such theoretical approach that is targeted; Million (2009) claims it is considered "polemic or at worst as not knowledge at all" (p. 54). Using this feminist theory, Indigenous authors create new languages for the multilayered facets of the effect of colonialism, including pain. Examples of pieces analyzed using felt theory are Campbell (1973), Mosionier (1999), Maracle (1996), and Thistle (2019); each is part fiction and part autobiography, but all express the pain, grief, and personal experience of political consciousness.

Another Indigenous feminist theory is standpoint theory, which, according to Foley (2003), allows for a new approach to constructing and examining Indigenous discourse. Smith (1999) and Moreton-Robinson (2013) have taken standpoint theory to a new level by shaping it into an Indigenous standpoint theory and asserting that any and all who use it must be Indigenous. Moreton-Robinson (2013) argues that Indigenous standpoint theory makes the concepts of objectified knowledge understood in our lived realities, which is now a "methodological tool operationalized by the knower" (Smith, 1999, as cited in Moreton- Robinson, 2013, p. 332).

6.4. **Queer theory.** Within contemporary Indigenous Studies, there does not appear to be open opposition to the use of queer theory; indeed, there is a campaign by Indigenous queer theorists to be included in the theorizing of the discipline. Queer theory addresses the manner in which colonialism imposes heteronormative views onto communities. According Finley (2008, 2011), capitalism,

ableism, ageism, religious oppression, heteropatriarchy, and colonialism can be interrupted through Indigenous queer critique. Finley (2008, 2011) speaks to the silencing of sexuality in Indigenous communities and Indigenous Studies, challenging both to be more open regarding queer sexuality. Smith (2010) and Rifkin (2014) support Finley's position that Indigenous Studies as a discipline needs to integrate more queer theory into all its work. A. Smith (2010) indicates that it provides the discipline with an "escape" (p. 44) from ethnographic entrapment and separate identity models (Finley, 2011). Through a focus on debunking the normalizing logic of settler colonialism, queer theory can interrupt the use of non-native anthropological knowledge in the community (Byrd, 2017; Finley, 2008, 2011; Morgensen, 2011; Rowe, 2017).

6.5. **Marxist Theory.** *Theorizing Indigenous Studies*, edited by Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith, explores the debate over Marxist theories in Indigenous Studies to see if they are antithetical to or supportive of the decolonization and liberation of Indigenous peoples. On the supportive side, Marxism demonstrates the revolutionary struggle of Indigenous people. Maracle (1996) argues that Marxist analysis allows scholars in Indigenous Studies to challenge the legitimacy of colonial institutions. Coulthard (2014a) demonstrates this approach by taking primitive accumulation and asserting Indigenous struggle through a robust analysis of settler colonialism. A. Smith (2010) speaks to those Indigenous scholars who insist that they should not have to read Western thinkers like Derrida, Marx, and Foucault simply because they are not Indigenous. Teaiwa (2005, as cited in Simpson & Smith, 2014) addresses the so-called internal policy of Indigenous Studies— "you can't cite Marx, Foucault, and so on because they are not Indigenous" (p. 19)—by stating that deploying these theorists actually demonstrates Indigenous intellectual sovereignty through the power of Indigenous Studies scholars to choose their own intellectual genealogies (Teaiwa, 2014).

Acclaimed non-Indigenous scholars like Rifkin, Kulchyski, and Berger work in the Indigenous Studies canon and use Western theories in their work. Rifkin (2014, 2017), employing a Foucauldian analysis of biopolitics, demonstrates the lens through which a non- Indigenous scholar can use Western thinking to view the shifting colonial strategies that racially categorize Indigenous people. Kulchyski (2005) and Tester & Kulchyski (1994) use an anti- colonial Marxist lens to analyze the oppression of Indigenous people through dispossession in northern communities, like the work of Berger (1977) highlighted in Coulthard (2014b), which seeks to resist colonial development and land appropriation.

Alternatively, based on Eurocentrism and hinged on a model that is presupposed in Western thought, Simpson and Smith (2014) discuss the reliance on labour exploitation instead of land appropriation. Smith (1999) and colleagues (2016) warn that Marx and those trained in Marxist theory are enculturated in the West and challenge liberal theories of modernization. Million (2014) notes that there has historically been unease in the discipline over theorizing that uses

"the master's tools" (p. 33); she reminds scholars of the ability to honour Indigenous paradigms, concepts, cultures, and histories by theorizing outside of theories that are "mixed with concepts of subjugation" (p. 34).

6.6. **Indigenous theory.** Pulitano (2003) speaks to the effects of theory and its ability to change how people see the world. Indigenous theoretical practices speak against the notion perpetuated by A. Smith (2010) that Indigenous Studies is confined to ethnic studies, anthropological approaches, or ethnographic multiculturalism (da Silva, 2006, as cited in A. Smith, 2010). Since the 1970s, Indigenous Studies since has struggled to define itself as a field due to the need to free itself from intellectual traditions and disciplinary formations that fail to honour the multiplicity of Indigeneity (Simpson & Smith, 2014). Over the past 50 years, Indigenous Studies has embraced its power to influence a variety of disciplinary formations and impact theoretical drivers (A. Smith, 2010). Subfields within Indigenous Studies have diversified and turned to theoretical invention and intervention.

Vizenor (1999) created a language to encapsulate how scholars see work like the concept of survivance as "an active sense of presence, the continuation of Native stories" (i); whom he provocatively calls "postindians" "are new stories of conversions and survivance" to describe post-modernity and transmit "a sense of Native motion and an active presence in *sui genus* sovereignty" (xvi). Vizenor shifts the power of words by subverting their meaning and reimagining language (Schmidt, 1995). Through Indigenous theory, Vizenor reflects on the rhetoric of Indianness and lays the groundwork for evaluating contemporary literature and politics (Blaeser, 1996). Although there are intersections with poststructuralist and postmodern theories, Vizenor's views serve as a prime example of Indigenous theory. Pulitano (2003) argues that Indigenous theory cannot be untouched by strategies of Western theory but also demonstrates Indigenous theorists' ability to move beyond the Eurocentric grid to honour Indigenous ways of knowing. LaRocque (2007) discusses the importance of being mindful of Western theory while being true to Indigeneity. Vizenor has taken several theoretical stances from 1962 to the present (Blaeser, 1996; Byrd, 2011), embodying the notion of survivance, which, according to Vizenor (1999), is neither monotheistic nor reciprocal.

Vine Deloria's philosophy spoke to the differences between Indigenous and Western metaphysics, centering the concept of land as altering academic discussions around appropriation; Deloria (1972, as cited in Coulthard, 2014b) called attention to the theoretical friction that arises when the Western is concerned with time and the Indigenous is concerned with space, leaving ontological relationality fractured. Basso (1996) attempts to make the reader cognizant of the intersectionality of both concepts to demonstrate Indigenous theory; Deloria's *Custer died for your sins*, a dialogue that sternly appraises anthropology and offers scathing critiques, spurred activists and institutions to action (Willard & Downing, 1991). Deloria's *God is red*, meanwhile, had an equally profound effect in creating dialogue around Indigenous theory (Kidwell & Velie, 2005).

Moreton-Robinson (2009) writes that Indigenous Studies enables the centering of Indigenous ways of knowing and theories in the contemporary world; they can be used both politically and intellectually. Andersen (2009) defends the search in Indigenous Studies for a theoretically distinctive existence within academia. Womack (1999) wants theory to be created from within the community, a plea echoed later by Kovach (2009) and Gaudry (2011).

## 7. Development of the canon

For the purpose of the introduction to the *Canadian Journal of Indigenous Studies* the contributions of the authors in the Indigenous Studies canon can be classified into four categories. Indigenous Studies as a discipline, according to Kulchyski (2000) and LaRocque (2010), is the destruction, interrogation, exposure, and creation of knowledge.

7.1. **The role of Indigenous Studies in destruction.** There is a call on scholars in Indigenous Studies to deconstruct "colonial misrepresentation in Canadian histography, literature and pop culture" (LaRocque, 2015, p. 13). Due to the varied nature of the discipline, there are different approaches to address these constructed misconceptions and misrepresentations. One explicit role of Indigenous Studies is to challenge stereotypes (Kidwell, 2009). In *Life lived like a story* (1990), Cruickshank elevates the voices of elders to address the misrepresentation of Indigenous people in the north. Through this work, a method of deconstructing by highlighting the positive lived experience of Indigenous elders undoes colonial perceptions of their reality. A myriad of scholars address histography, literature, and pop culture through the power of story, revealing to the reader the various imaginary conceptions of Indigenous people, including the dying, literary, heroic, and pretend Indian stereotypes that have historically populated Western thought.

Francis (2011) continues this profound work by tracing the Canadian perception of Indigenous people; his *The imaginary Indian* reveals how the mythologized image of the "Indian" feeds stereotypes even in the present day. Francis (2011) plays an integral part in the naming and dispelling of racism that exists in Canadian pop culture and literature. Acoose (2016) exposes literature as an epicenter for stereotypical misconceptions of Indigenous women; her *Iskwewak Kah'ki yaw ni Wahkomakanak* sets out to deconstruct the image perpetuated by Western literature. Peters et al. (2018) use the power of reconstruction to deconstruct popular beliefs about Indigenous incompatibility with urban lived experience while challenging the stereotypes of the Métis in the minds of Winnipeggers, which were heavily shaped by the media in the twentieth century.

7.2. **The role of Indigenous Studies in dismantling.** Cardinal (1999) continues to speak to the injustice of Indigenous people at the hands of the Canadian government. A second edition of their *The Unjust Society* interrogates the government while dismantling the rhetoric used to oppress and "swindle" Indigenous people (1999, p. 35). As an agent of truth, Cardinal (1999) addresses the false history of Canada's relationship with Indigenous people, revealing the cause of

the disparities that continue to affect and afflict First Nations communities. Government policy in Canada is dictated by the belief systems of the politicians and their constituents—systems built on a foundation of racism and misinformation that relies on the colonial paradigm to oppress Indigenous people. In the canon of Indigenous Studies, Carter (1990) works toward critically analyzing the history of Canada's policies and dispels common beliefs; *Lost Harvest* highlights the nature of colonialism found in the mechanisms of subjugation and interrogates misconceptions around Indigenous agriculture.

The perceived superiority of the colonial paradigm of sexuality and the erroneous stereotypes imposed on Indigenous gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual, queer, and Two-spirit (2SLGBTQIA+) people are dismantled in the edited collection *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical interventions in theory, politics, and literature*. Within the canon of Indigenous Studies, Driskill et al.'s (2011) work fundamentally alters the perception of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community perpetuated by colonial thought and signifies a shift in critical academic scholarship. Dismantling pervasive colonial paradigms is propelled by engaging in Indigenous ways of knowing, as seen in Simpson's (2011) theorizing within Nishnaabeg thought, calls on scholars to embrace their ways of knowing. Through this action, the discipline of Indigenous Studies actively privileges "Biskaabiiyang" (Simpson, 2011, p. 49), or "returning to ourselves" to look back and evaluate how colonial paradigms have affected Indigenous people. The denial of the inherent rights of Indigenous people acknowledged in the treaties shaped by Western politics and institutions relies on colonial paradigms. Craft's (2013) work interpreting Treaty One from an Anishinabe understanding dismantles the colonial stereotype and acknowledges the strength and prowess of the Indigenous negotiators, thus playing an integral role in the canon.

Fred J. Shore's *Threads in the sash* answered the call for adding to the canon an accessible monograph examining the Métis, Canada's "forgotten people" (Sealey & Lussier, 1975). Shore (2017) uses a Métis lens to discount the colonial understanding of Métisness and undercuts decades of Western scholars' assertions of who is—and thus who is not—Métis. Reflecting the inclusion of more Indigenous scholars in Indigenous Studies and their importance in that field, authors like Simpson (2011), Simpson (2007), Andersen (2014), and Shore (2017) are publishing monographs that delve into the history of their own people in a powerful dismantling of long-dominant paradigms. The role of the Indigenous Studies canon is to amplify the voices of Indigenous people.

7.3. **The role of Indigenous Studies in exposure.** Through the books, narratives, and other texts that are creating the canon of Indigenous Studies, scholars like Deloria (1969) have exposed the contradictions and hidden internal assumptions of academia and colonial thought. Exposing the hegemonic Western canon—fraught as it is with inaccuracies regarding Indigenous knowledges and capabilities—is found in work by scholars like Adams (1975), Vizenor (1999), Alfred (1999) Green (2007), LaRocque(2010), Byrd (2011), and Coulthard (2014a).

Deloria's (1969) *Indian manifesto* addresses stereotypes while targeting the Western ideologies that plague Indigenous communities: laws, policy, governments, missionaries, scholars, and colonized Indigenous leaders. Reprinted in 1988, the polemic sparked dialogue amongst scholars, resulting in works like Alfred's (1999) *Peace, power, righteousness: An indigenous manifesto* that critique the prevailing intellectual framework and call for a rejection of the colonial ideology that subverts Indigenous thought. The work exposes Indigenous thinkers to a reality removed from the present day in with the goal of reimagining a world dominated by Indigenous rule. Also published in 1999, Vizenor's *Manifest manners: Narratives on postindian survivance* could not be more blunt: "We don't want power over white institutions; we want white institutions to disappear" (p. 20). Vizenor (1999), like Alfred (1999) and Deloria (1969), calls for denouncing Western hegemony and ideologies by exposing their true nature and effects on Indigenous communities. Inspired by conversations initiated by Deloria (1969), Alfred (1999), and Vizenor (1999), Byrd's *The transit of empire* (2011) critiques colonialism using legislation, literary texts, and historical instances; it exposes how the empire thrives through the assimilation of Indigenous people into the systems of the oppressor. Adams (1975), in a work now regarded a classic of revisionist history, retells the story of Canada by placing the atrocities of the government on full display, shattering any notion that the country is protecting Indigenous people. Adams's work played an important role in awakening Canada to colonial realities and exposed the ideologies comfortably at play in Canadian society.

Highlighting the Indigenous feminist call for decolonization, Green's (2007) edited collection critiques colonial oppression and the canon as well as the newly released 3rd edition Starblanket (2024). Written entirely by women, *Making Space for Indigenous feminism* magnifies the need for intersectionality within the women's and gender studies canons while clarifying the pitfalls of patriarchy for Indigenous thought. LaRocque (2015) states that "Indigenous Studies, then, challenges dominant and hegemonic knowledge theories" (p. 9). LaRocque's *When the other is me: Native resistance discourse, 1850–1990* (2010) embodies this sentiment through a metacritical approach that exposes the racism within the Canadian history canon. Coulthard (2014a) rejects colonial hegemony, citing scholars like Deloria (1969), Cardinal (1999), Alfred (1999), and LaRocque (2010) and building on their efforts to expose and denounce colonial rule.

Coulthard's *Red skin, white masks* (2014b) exposes reconciliation, pluralism, and consultation as a series of false promises, highlighting the need to tell the cautionary tale of the effects of colonialism on the colonized as seen through the works that appeared at the inception of the Indigenous Studies canon, drawing on Fanon (1963/1965), Memmi (1965), and Said (1979). Exposure of the nature of Western hegemony, ideology, and purpose, Indigenous Studies scholars cite the work of these political thinkers to demonstrate the universality of the colonial experience on the colonized. Simpson (2017) advances the Indigenous call to denounce Western hegemony and bolster actions for cultural resurgence through disruption of the colonial state. Exposing the ideologies of the settler

state as counter to Indigenous theory, Simpson's *As we have always done* (2017) aims to reclaim Indigenous thought from the Western teachings found in colonial institutions.

7.4. **The role of Indigenous Studies in creation.** The creation of new knowledge within Indigenous Studies depended on different disciplines when the canon was first conceived. Brown, a historian, typifies the relationship between Indigenous Studies and history. Her *Strangers in Blood* explores the North American fur trade in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, addressing a gap in the fur trade literature. Brown's work is featured in Van Kirk's (1983) *Many tender ties*, which was heralded as the first Indigenous women-specific text creating new knowledge on the women in the fur trade from 1670 to 1870. Both Brown (1980) and Van Kirk (1983) underpin today's Métis literature and serve as foundations for the canon. Andersen (2014) included Brown (1980) in the transformative *"Métis": Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood*, which aims to address the misconception of Métis as based on race. As a discipline, Indigenous Studies strives to deconstruct, interrogate, and expose through the creation of new knowledge, and Andersen's (2014) book typifies these goals for Métis literature.

According to Kulchyski (2000), Indigenous Studies strives to meet the demands of both the Aboriginal and academic communities (p. 15). Work in Indigenous Studies requires scholars to create new knowledge while working with the community as the canon progresses over time. Works by Brown (1980) and Van Kirk (1983) that are devoid of community connections are replaced with works committed to working with the community—St. Onge (2004), Devine (2004), Macdougall (2010), and so on—and tracing the ethnogenesis and lineages of the Métis. Saunders and Dubois (2019) were endorsed by the Métis National Council and granted access to all five Métis governing bodies to create a knowledge set regarding politics and governance that documents how the Métis govern themselves and drawing on their language. Bakker's (1997) monograph on Michif created the first in-depth linguistic, historical, and social discussion surrounding the language of the Métis. Working closely with the community and academic linguists, Bakker (1997) is a good example—even a precursor—of Kulchyski's (2000) sentiment.

In Indigenous Studies, traditional knowledges have been legitimated by introducing the concept of those knowledges into the canon; over time, they became widely accepted in the academy and now provide a voice in the community. Ridington (1988), through an anthropological approach with the Dunne-za-created *Trail of tears*, proclaimed the elevation of oral history and ways of knowing, privileging Dunne-za knowledge over traditional academic scholarship. Basso's (1996) ethnographic work in *Wisdom in place* demonstrates the power of Indigenous place and language by using Western Apache knowledge as the most authoritative voice. Both Ridington (1988) and Basso (1996) reflect Kulchyski's (2000) later proclamation that "Indigenous Studies is to document, critically examine and sometimes celebrate cultural practices of living Aboriginal people" (p. 18).

Kulchyski's *Sound of a drum* uses narrative and ethnography to document the politics in Nunavut and Denendeh while critically examining the process of colonialism in the north.

McKegney's (2014) and Anderson and Innes's (2015) edited collections address Indigenous masculinities, thus adding new knowledge to the canon and acting as catalysts for dialogue around the lived experience of Indigenous men. McKegney's (2014) collection features 22 interviews with scholars and artists, adding to the canon a recognition of self-worth and gender relations in the Indigenous community. Anderson and Innes (2015), through a series of essays, develop new knowledge and recognition of lived experience through the social, political, and psychological issues faced by Indigenous men. Numerous edited collections focusing on Indigenous women in the Indigenous Studies canon explore feminism (Green, 2007; Monture & McGuire, 2009; Suzack, Huhndorf, Perreault, & Barman, 2010) , while other monographs (Van Kirk, 1983; Cruickshank, 1990; Anderson, 2011) depict the stories of Indigenous women. However, work specifically on Indigenous men remains rare.

The "lack of discipline" (Kulchyski, 2000, p. 20) within Indigenous Studies is celebrated in Monture and McGuire's edited collection (2009), which features a wide array of scholars from disciplines ranging from law and medicine to history and political science and knowledge from wisdom keepers, activists, and artists; the collection creates new knowledge by discussing the varied experiences of Indigenous women. Within the canon, monographs from a large number of disciplines also symbolize the "combination of different academic parts" (Kulchyski, 2000, p. 20) that makes up Indigenous Studies. Through an ethnohistorian's lens, Miller (2010) introduces new knowledge to the canon through an examination of Anishinaabeg leadership practices from 1760 to 1845, arguing against assumptions of weakness in the Anishinaabe and deconstructing the knowledge architecture historically created in Western academia. In *Braiding sweetgrass*, Potawatomi botanist Kimmerer (2013) supplies the canon with an in-depth exploration of ecological consciousness that recognizes Indigenous ways of knowing inside the academy and creates new knowledge with which other disciplines can engage.

Continuing the thread that Indigenous Studies is a bountiful discipline, the literature on residential schools within the canon uses the work of the historian Milloy (1999) as an anchor, ultimately resulting in an anniversary edition featuring a foreword by Mary Jane Logan McCallum (Milloy, 2017). Regan (2010), an Indigenous governance scholar, combines survivor narrative with scholarly discourse; as the residential school literary genre expands the book creates a new dialogue around reconciliation in the canon. Million (2013), whose work is in American Indian research, expands the canon with the creation of *Therapeutic nations*, which recognizes the historical origins of traumas and proposes a stance for Indigenous human rights.

In combination with Milloy (1997) and Regan (2010), *Therapeutic nations* legitimizes the trauma felt throughout the Indigenous community while sparking

a new dialogue around the monetization and dehumanization that healing has become. In the canon of Indigenous Studies, we see a 50-year legacy of scholars who, according to Lyons (2011), wield tools from a wide array of disciplines in acts of resistance, extending far beyond an ethnic or minority study (A. Smith, 2010; Smith, 1999; L. Smith et al., 2016; Warrior, 2014; Willard & Downing, 1991). Through its canon, Indigenous Studies engages in textual production that emerges from the community (Fitzgerald, 2010; Gaudry, 2011, 2015; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 1999; L. Smith et al., 2016). Simpson and Smith (2014) state that Indigenous Studies "since its inception has steadfastly engaged the historical and political contexts that defines truth" (p. 3).

## 8. Conclusion

A. Smith (2014) and Warrior (2009) speak to the distinctive theoretical and methodological interdisciplinary formations that together have informed Indigenous Studies. The fluid understanding of individual nations' ways of being demands that the discipline be flexible enough to include all voices, all fields, all ways of knowing. Even though debate has run rampant since the founding of Indigenous Studies in the 1970s, with some demanding hard and fast rules and a clear trajectory for the discipline, its fluidity serves Indigenous people, the institutions, and the scholars that engage in it. The *Canadian Journal of Indigenous Studies* aspires to be the home of future scholarship that celebrates the diversity of the discipline in its role as destruction, interrogation, exposure, and creation of knowledge. Lifting up simultaneously multiple ways of knowing and being whose authors utilize a myriad of theoretical frameworks and methodologies based on Indigenous worldviews from across the globe.

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[1] Faculty of Education, Univresity of Winnipeg, Canada

*Email address*: l.forsythe@uwinnipeg.ca