

**"How can we partner experiential learning with Indigenous communities to achieve sustainability in a decolonizing way? Moreover, how can we positively accomplish this?"**



President Macri meets Félix Díaz.  
Photo by Casa Rosanda Argentina (2015)

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INDG 502 - 01  
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Researchers: Bia Pasqualini & Cory Whitecap  
Due: April 14 - 2021**

We are Cory Whitecap and Bia Pasqualini. Our research and data gathering will aid in answering our topic question, "How can we partner experiential learning with Indigenous communities to achieve sustainability in a decolonizing way? Moreover, how can we positively accomplish this?"

Our role in this project is to contribute our shared knowledge and research/ findings to learn about the Office of Sustainability while exploring various research methodologies, developing recommendations and suggestions concerning our topic question. This project will attempt to relate implementing community-based research, community champions, partnerships, various data collection methods to the recommendations and suggestions. We believe these will create positive partnerships via decolonizing experiential learning when respectfully applied. This project's essential aim will be to gather data from scholarly articles/ websites and other publications concerning experiential learning for sustainability, communicate our findings with each partner/ organization and produce the collected research via this report. Our goal is to contribute our combined research results, Indigenous methodologies, analysis, and knowledge to pursuing potential solutions and recommendations to answer our topic question in a "good way."

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Firstly, we would like to respectfully acknowledge the traditional territories of the people of the Treaty 7 region in southern Alberta, which includes the Blackfoot Confederacy (comprising the Siksika, Piikani, and Kainai First Nations), the Tsuut'ina Nation (comprised of the Sarcee/ Dene), and the Stoney Nakoda Nation (including Chiniki, Bears paw, and Wesley First Nations). The City of Calgary is also home to Métis Nation of Alberta, Region 3 (U of C, 2021), Inuit, Saulteaux, and Cree, among the many other Indigenous Nations.

We gratefully appreciate the Traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders presently with us and those no longer here. We establish this acknowledgment as an act of reconciliation and thankfulness to those whose territory we inhabit or visit. An imperative and suitable position to employ Indigenous approaches/ methodologies to study is "self-in-relation" (Graveline, 2000, p.363). Without further ado, we are Bia Pasqualini and Cory Whitecap, the researchers and writers of this final proposal.

## Bia Pasqualini

Hello, my name is Bia Pasqualini, short for Biagio. I am a blessed father of two beautiful children, a son, and a brother to amazing parents and siblings. I am also a fortunate and grateful partner, and a mature student enrolled in International Indigenous studies at the University of Calgary in my third year. I was born in Calgary, Alberta, but my parents are both from San Giovanni, Cosenza, Italy. My name and birth location reveal that I am of a proud mixed Italian/ Canadian descent. My parents came to Canada in the '70s with nothing but luggage filled with clothing, dreams, and aspirations to establish a new homeland. I am very honored to work on this proposal document, as my partner Cory and I compliment and respect each other's nationality and perspectives on Indigenous research. My experience with Indigenous research methodologies entails primarily experiential learning and has been utilized mostly via my academics, including college and university. Moreover, partial incorporation of working with the homeless population in Lethbridge, Alberta at the Mission Streets Alive, a non-profit organization that acts as a closet for homeless individuals. It was here where my interest was piqued in aiding others while building rapport and future networks.

My aspirations in completing my degree incorporate becoming an advocate for Indigenous peoples and employing all the gained knowledge to break myths, alter/ create favorable policies, speak for those that cannot, and raise awareness of historical tragedies while transitioning to become a Social worker in the process. I am motivated by my respect for Indigenous people's cultures, language, history, and traditions. Furthermore, my motivation stems from a desire to succeed in all endeavors while assisting future generations in any way possible. I will employ the seven Indigenous traditional frameworks and principles alongside the four R's on this journey. I believe it is noteworthy to mention that this project has allowed me to grow in more ways than one, for which I am thankful. Additionally, I have had the pleasure and opportunity of working with Cory, who has been considerate, supportive, knowledgeable, and overall, an amazing project partner. This report's development has been an exciting learning journey with the beginning of a brilliant friendship.

## Cory Whitecap

Hello, my name is Cory Whitecap, and I am a grateful father of four beautiful and amazing daughters and two awesome granddaughters. My personal research has led me to my family lineage, which comes from The Sihasapa (Blackfoot / Teton) Lakota, Santee (Dakota), Assiniboine (Nakota), and Plains Cree heritage. This research is still ongoing. My grandfather was a veteran of three wars, my parents were residential school survivors, and I am a sixties scoop survivor. My children are the first generation to be free from that system. My interest in Indigenous research methodology stems from my life experience.

Growing up disconnected from my culture, I was constantly being asked who I am, to which I could not answer at the time. In the past 30 years, I have set my mind, heart, and Spirit to find my place within the circle of my identity and culture. I had the honor throughout the years of working with many Indigenous / Non-Indigenous people who shared their knowledge, ceremony, traditions, and teachings, which helped me on my healing path. I also had the honor of helping the wounded, who struggled with similar issues I faced when I was out there. Healing from homelessness, addiction, trauma, and lost identity helped me grow strong and allowed me to share my experience with others to help them find their way. My goal is to bring my experience to the forefront and utilize it to help other Indigenous people find their way to "home." This project has allowed me the privilege of working with Bia, who has been respectful, supportive, and a fantastic project partner. This project has been a grateful learning experience for me and the start of a wonderful friendship.

<b>MOTHER:</b>		
Sihasapa (Blackfoot/ Tetonwan/ Teton) Lakota	Great Grandfather	Grandfather
Mdewakanton (Santee) Dakota	Great Grandmother	
<b>FATHER:</b>		
Plains Cree	Both Grandparents	

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## RESEARCH AS RELATIONSHIP

The concept of connections, the elevated value positioned on relationship building, and knowledge sharing are at the center of Indigenous methodologies. Correlations to stories, people, identities, and ways of knowing that develop through research, are significant findings in addition to the topic under study. Ethics of active listening in research is a profound engagement tool with Indigenous communities, which has been at the heart of increasing recognition and understanding in the academic research community. Non-Indigenous researchers engaged in Indigenous systems and philosophy are encouraged to distinguish links amongst personal projects and community goals.

Openness, authenticity, honesty, and commitment to valid participant experiences are valuable qualities that aid in relationship building. Additionally, utilizing Indigenous voices and epistemology in the center of the research process recognizes the impact of historical factors, and respects full tribal sovereignty, ownership, and control. Lastly, it incorporates Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the center of the process (McGregor, 2018). While building a trusting, positive rapport, it is always imperative to keep the seven Indigenous frameworks and principles in mind: respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity interrelatedness, and synergy correlating to the frameworks. Simultaneously, the principles entail humility, respect, wisdom, courage, truth, honesty, and love (Archibald, J.-A., Lee-Morgan, J., De Santolo, J., & Smith, L. T. 2019).

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Our Topic

*"How can we partner experiential learning with Indigenous communities to achieve sustainability in a decolonizing way? Moreover, how can we positively accomplish this?"*

### Office of Sustainability:

Although the O of S has not formally adopted the sustainable development goals, it ventures to draw connections between Indigenization and the SDGs. By highlighting different research initiatives, events, and outreach programs intersectional between sustainability and Indigenization, there is much overlap between those topics. At its core, sustainability values and reduces inequality, promotes diversity, and environmental stewardship, which are also essential within several Indigenous cultures. In contrast, the SDGs do align with the UN and UNDRIP, where overlap occurs.

AMB - Anishinaabe mino-bimaadiziwin  
 ICT - Indigenous Corporate Training Model  
 O of S - Office of Sustainability  
 O of IE - Office of Indigenous Engagement

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals  
 UN - United Nations  
 UNDRIP - United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People  
 WRM - Wildfire Research Methodology

The O of S primarily focuses on engagement and reporting the university's progress regarding research community engagement and outreach with Indigenous communities and monitors the university's progress and recordings. The O of S works with the Office of Indigenous Engagement and the Indigenous Strategy Team to offer various programs. Often, the O of S will encounter grants that can be applied for, and once obtained, are distributed to them. The director works closely with the OIE, and the O of S has collaborated with the Indigenous strategy teams on several initiatives. The O of S frames sustainability in terms of observing via the frontline commission's definition. Within their office, they use SDGs to frame their definition of sustainability. For example, looking at poverty reduction, sustainable fuses, food systems, good health and well-being, quality education, gender equality, reducing social inequality, clean water, renewable energy, and economic growth.

Furthermore, the O of S examines industry innovation infrastructure, responsible consumption of production, climate action, life on land, life below water, social justice, and sound partnership institutions for the goals; essentially, going through all seventeen SDGs, pursuing projects related to any of the specified areas. Our project partner is responsible for many aspects of communications. She compiles the annual sustainability report and submits data to universities, writing articles, case studies, and applies for grants on behalf of the O of S to advance sustainability programming. Additionally, she supports the campus as a learning lab initiative by working with the coordinator, offering students learning opportunities for experiential sustainability projects. Fialkow, A. (2021, February 11). Personal Zoom Interview [Personal Zoom Interview].

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

Our Interview with Aviva entailed a semi-structured approach. The questions were open-ended, allowing for discussion on a deeper level. This approach encouraged two-way dialogue, which permitted a comprehensive informal discourse on the questions asked. Our transcriptional approach included the Microsoft Word dictate option due to the technical difficulties of transcribing with Zoom.

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## Bia

Our research methodologies consisted of experiential learning, qualitative and explanatory. Qualitative research approaches task Indigenous communities and organizations with being mindful and cognizant of the reality of their own cultural perception (Evans, Mike, Hole, Rachelle, Berg, Lawrence D, Hutchinson, Peter, & Sookraj, Dixon, 2009). Therefore, an individual's capability is discovered via their capacity for self-development and awareness. Since our findings and research are derived from first-hand observation, such as articles, journals, publications, and personal stories, the essential qualities of the findings emerge. Our exploratory methods focused primarily on our research findings and recommendations within our topic question. Lastly, experiential learning is acknowledged as understanding our findings via our experience throughout our research (McGregor, 2018).

This type of interview with research could employ inductive approaches, which generates meaning from our collection; secondary, based on data collected from previous sources and exploratory, utilized to investigate an issue not clearly defined. Additionally, storytelling circles as forms of research or approaches with Indigenous communities reflect Aboriginal research's cultural and ethical protocols; and that there are essential similarities in their histories and current identities (Baskin, 2005).

Our classmates Valerie Fox and Aileen Runner (2021) provide some alternative and blended approaches that can include but are not limited to community-based participatory and Indigenous Storywork approaches. Community-based research seeks to make a productive distinction globally. It can be regarded as attaining social good (Ryder Courtney, Mackean, Tamara, Coombs, Julieann, Williams, Hayley, Hunter, Kate, Holland, Andrew J. A, & Ivers, Rebecca Q. 2020).

Research with Indigenous peoples should involve a formal or informal community ethics evaluation process, merged with an institutional assessment, where applicable. A community-based research approach permits Indigenous communities to oversee and regulate the research agenda. The Indigenous Storywork model places further emphasis on respectful, trusting relations. Indigenous Storywork grants "First Nations storytellers to use their personal life experiences as teaching stories like how they use traditional stories" (Archibald, 2008, p. 112).

## Cory

My research approach elicits experiential learning, acknowledging “how I/ we can incorporate it, and its importance within this report and building relations between the O of S and Indigenous communities” which stems from my personal participation. Also, I appreciated opportunities to engage in immersion, specifically volunteering, internships, student placement, liaison work, attending ceremonies (e.g., sweat lodges, teaching circles, round dances, healing circles) where we could speak amongst each other within the context of healing.

Traditional Indigenous etiquette taught me to understand specific protocols when participating in Indigenous research that is respectful of local Traditions, ceremonies, and practices. “The sources of Indigenous Knowledge are also often experiential and cannot always be explained through text alone” (McGregor, 2018). To generalize Indigenous Knowledge does not do justice for the unique viewpoints of each Nation’s Knowledge keeper, Elder, community member, and participant. One cannot homogenize Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional practice into a specific approach. Blackfoot teachings are unique and may not mesh with Diné teachings. Similarly, Stoney methodologies might not correspond with Cree perspectives, and so on. Inspired by my late uncle, a respected Knowledge Keeper and Elder, “each Nation’s practices and Traditions are wholly unique and deserve to be respected and acknowledged” during the research process (Tawiyaka, 1988).

Numerous distinct threads within Indigenous research concurrently interlink to create a pattern. There is no single formula for writing or conveying Indigenous research (McGregor, 2018). I believe the researcher’s role when addressing Indigenous methodologies is to keep in mind the unique protocols in approaching each community. Both collectively and independently, addressing the Knowledge keeper’s individual perspective and experience will help the researcher validate the information presented. Therefore, I believe Indigenization does not seek to supersede western methods of research. Inspired by one of my Traditional mentors, I understand that Indigenous knowledge and protocols complement and even enhance academic sources and citations in teaching respect for the Indigenous frame of reference while working together to reach common goals (Sugarbear, 1994).

## ANALYSIS

### Bia

The comprehensive coding process/ analysis was configured using NVivo software, allowing data organization and creating a world map. A clearer comprehension of the world map was established, strengthened, and highlighted within the data gathered/ coded using selected text and themes. Additionally, this procedure will facilitate clarity of themes and the organization of thoughts. The central coding themes were uncovered via initial/ sub and holistic methods. After careful consideration of each article and sentence/ paragraph utilized, the topics we found correlate to our project partner topic question:

*“How can we partner experiential learning with Indigenous communities to achieve sustainability in a decolonizing way? Moreover, how can we positively accomplish this?”*

Some of our agreed central and core topics necessitate sustainability, decolonizing framework, experiential learning, Indigenous knowledge, and community. We utilized Nvivo, accessing the information more easily and employing our results for quicker discovery and future use of arranged and organized specific themes.

After analyzing the transcription, we each completed coding our respective portions of the interview. Cory’s world map, represented in the appendix, is situated around the first part of the interview and transcribed as collectively agreed upon. In comparison, my section of the world map presents additional files, pdf, journals, and notes all combined, hence the extra information and added values and themes. An analysis and explanation of the combined maps can be found in the appendices. In response to our peer review feedback, aesthetically speaking, the name “world map” includes detailed circles with all contributing elements related to the significant issues and themes. The space backdrop I incorporated is analogous to my understanding of the circles as worlds, hence the unique themed background.

We believe it is worth mentioning that although our data analysis showcases various themes, it does not comprehensively answer our project question. However, with a fundamental understanding of the situational analysis of the themes and topics, we could continue to research various methods to refine specific findings. This process will allow us to answer how we can respectfully engage Indigenous communities, creating positive partnerships via a decolonizing framework for experiential learning with a qualitative and quantitative approach.

## Cory

Utilizing NVivo, we recorded the primary topic references from the highest nodes referenced to the lowest. Academic team measured at 10, engagement at 7, Indigenous Knowledge and electronic data interchange were equal at 6, and experiential learning was the lowest at only five reference nodes. These nodes represent the total numerical values of each theme. Indigenous knowledge and electronic data interchange were equal in references during the interview, indicating they were equally crucial within the O of S. The lowest indicator was experiential learning, which demonstrates less emphasis on consultation between staff and students in the context of Indigenous knowledge sharing and experiential learning. I believe that the lowest numbers represent the need for more attention.

My topic questions are:

1. *How can the O of S do better to include Indigenous knowledge into experiential learning and the growth of sustainable development goals?*
2. *How do the SDGs relate to Indigenous research methodology, inclusion, reconciliation, and knowledge sharing with all Indigenous and Metis communities within Alberta?*

This project has been teaching me the meaning of Indigenization and decolonization. My understanding about decolonization in Indigenous research methodology is the intent and action of changing the mindset and expectations of western thinking and concepts to be more flexible. Learning to be more fluid and incorporating Indigenous perspectives and contributions could potentially help enhance relationships between campus offices and Indigenous communities. More community engagement and experiential learning on and off campus would help strengthen partnerships that have Indigenous and Non-Indigenous stakeholders working together for this goal. Establishing and developing pluralistic research methodologies that complement each other, instead of scrutinizing and excluding one in favor of the other, will positively change the O of S and their SDGs. However, without further research into the office and Indigenous partners' ongoing relations, all I can do is speculate the answers.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### Bia

We can determine that the interview question responses moderately supported and guided our research, permitting us to acknowledge the O of S' role alongside goals and vision. Our corresponding findings demonstrate how to conduct research respectfully and in a decolonizing manner that requires a relationship with sharing and listening protocols. Listening to a story is an all-encompassing commitment. Additionally, our research suggests that when approaching Indigenous communities positively, it is essential to comprehend the community we are attempting to build a partnership with. Thorough historical research of political, social, and environmental accounts, traditional protocols, and respectful engagement are essential. Consider executing primary research with Indigenous communities, not on them (Baskin, 2005).

According to the Assembly of First Nations ethics guide, (2006) occasionally, researchers confront substantial disputes when designing and employing various approaches that acknowledge two profoundly distinct epistemologies. The methods should recognize that it is up to the First Nations to ascertain if and how their Aboriginal traditional knowledge can be employed or not. While attempting to build a trusting and positive rapport, it is imperative to keep the seven Indigenous frameworks and principles in mind. The traditional Indigenous frameworks include respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, interrelatedness, holism, and synergy. Simultaneously, the principles entail humility, respect, wisdom, courage, truth, honesty, and love (Archibald, J.-A., Lee-Morgan, J., De, S. J., & Smith, L. T. 2019).

The more we know about the group we study and work with, the more feasible it is to gauge how that relationship will develop. Integrating the seven principles and frameworks will provide a smoother transition to research when working alongside Indigenous communities. Storytelling and experience include knowledge, which necessitates a responsibility upon the listener. This incorporates both interpretation and analysis of the phenomena being created or are being told. McGregor et al. (2018) suggest that storytelling is vital to recognize Aboriginal research methods. They emphasize,

*"Book knowledge is important; however, the stories of our community members on the land provide a richer understanding of or circumstances" (p. 120).*

It is imperative to integrate a respectful, responsible, and interrelated approach, incorporating the seven traditional Indigenous frameworks and principles throughout the entire process regarding relationships with Indigenous communities. Before working with an Indigenous community, researchers must appreciate the vibrant cultures that existed in North America before colonization and the communities that continue to flourish (Battiste, 2000). Further, researchers must also comprehend how colonization influences Indigenous peoples' experience of the research process (Bartlett et al., 2007).

Numerous times researchers have barged into communities, obtained data, and left without sharing their findings. This tactic did not improve community health and well-being (Battiste, 2013). For many years, Indigenous peoples were the subjects of studies, and the research results did not strengthen their culture, identity, or welfare. Fortunately, Indigenous peoples have been asserting their role in research practices and taking charge of the research process (Castellano, 2004). Regrettably, Indigenous peoples' negative experiences with research are connected to colonization.

The historical legacy of research and Indigenous communities has been considered religious, but essential principles for conducting respectful research and Indigenous communities have surfaced progressively (Archibald, 2008). According to Steinhauer (2002), Indigenous research should ensure that the three R's respect, reciprocity, and relationality guide the overall process. Archibald (2008) later expanded on the three Rs, establishing his own set, including respect, reverence, responsibility, and reciprocity, to adopt the seven principles governing the practice of First Nations stories and storytelling for educational objectives. Moreover, the four Rs represent respect for First Nations' cultural integrity, relevance to First Nations perspectives and experiences, reciprocal relationships, and responsibility via participation (McGregor et al., 2018). Recently, we added in a fifth “R,” reconciliation, as we believe it is an essential aspect of respectful research and engagement to repair the damage done by invasive and ignorant research approaches in the past.

The significance of pinpointing ourselves as researchers concerning our topic has been founded in several research and theory paradigms. Indigenous researchers are cognizant that who we are counts when approaching our research. According to Restoule and Archibald (2010) Indigenous researchers are distinctive from the tactics employed when exploring research questions. Mainly because in locating the data, we can also distinguish ourselves by gender, race, class, and spirit. They believe,



*"When we approach our research in a good way, with good hearts and good Minds, Spirit manifests to make things happen even if we are not mindful or conscious of spirit in our work, it, nevertheless, guides us (p.3).*

Possible methods of acquiring information and knowledge while approaching Indigenous communities can include Asemah (tobacco). As an inquiry method, Asemah requires a commitment to lifelong learning, vital to cultivating a greater awareness of its connotation (Debassige, 2010). Passing that information to coming generations comprehensively and satisfactorily by learning traditional knowledge is valuable. Scholars must be inclined to do the work to enhance comprehension of the methods of inquiry or risk minimizing the ways of knowing to a checklist. Restoule & Archibald (2010) convey a modest appreciation concerning vital knowledge collected or gifted from tobacco. They illuminate that the tobacco plant obtains immense power to unite entities with the sacred and physical world.

According to Rheault, (1999) Anishinaabe mino-bimaadiziwin AMB (The Good Life) may be considered a research methodology. It seeks to eliminate academic training primacy to detect the parameters of common-sense interpretations of research. Debassige (2010) examines the approaches of conducting research primarily informed by Indigenous ways of knowing throughout the research process. AMB is a fusing and surpassing concept encompassing the past, present, and future of good and respectful approaches to life, including Indigenous research. AMB methodology is a specific research approach for progression. Further, Debassige (2010) deems that traditional groundwork and ongoing traditional participation be at the core of Indigenous researchers' way of knowing.

Talking circles are another positive approach to the inquiry of Indigenous traditional knowledge. Employing talking circles as a methodology, Graveline (2000) customized the standard way of conducting them for data compilation objectives. He deems modifications are essential and can be respectful, but researchers must consciously participate in them. Uncovering and institutionalizing traditional knowledge can be regarded as a method for directing traditional knowledge from the tribal communities to the classroom.

Similarly, Trudeau, L., & Cherubini, B. (2010) emphasize the Wildfire Research Methodology (WRM) is a mode to obtain access to information. It incorporates trusted parallels to talking circles where participants share their experiences and perceptions of a particular topic in a supportive and safe environment. In various Aboriginal traditions, the circle is symbolic of respect and holism. In many ways,

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the use of WRM complements a collaborative research atmosphere because it is centered on traditional Aboriginal beliefs. Trudeau et al., (2010) assert that they employed WRM across a global demographic, including Anishnabe, Hotinonshoni (Haudenosaunee), Nishnawbe-Aski, and Metis people.

The WRM provides a new configuration to research practice and, more interestingly, provides considerable appreciation to healing notions. Furthermore, it recognizes the adverse effect of colonialism on Aboriginal peoples and permits participants to share what have often been painful experiences of marginalization in a confidential environment (Trudeau, L., & Cherubini, B. 2010).

Researchers must be cognizant of local customs, procedures and anticipate varied viewpoints within the same community. For example, in Anishinaabe communities, offering tobacco is considered a sacred medicine, representing an inducement to a mutual relationship. Tobacco can be considered a tool or inquiry method. According to Restoule (2010), one of the teachings an Elders shares correlates to tobacco, marking it as a “911 call to the Creator” (p.31). However, it is also the tradition of faith that persisted from the beginning of life. Additionally, it exemplifies an immense responsibility one must accept in tobacco use. Indigenous research methodologies are founded on relationships that should be based on respect, reciprocity, relevance, and responsibility (Restoule, 2008).

In addition to talking circles and WRM, storytelling is a valid form of Aboriginal knowledge. Storytelling provides a method of passing on one's knowledge that stands somewhat outside social scientific research. Moreover, it comprises a responsibility on the role of the listener/ researcher, combines both interpretation and analysis, and anticipates many justifications for the phenomena being researched. Lastly, it is a creative search for solutions and a political act of liberation and self-determination (McGregor 2018).

The storytelling circle as a methodology reveals the cultural and ethical protocols of Aboriginal research. Cultural data is taken out of context because Western viewpoints do not recognize all the cultural interpretations of why and how of Indigenous doings. Western researchers misconstrue what is happening and therefore may draw inaccurate conclusions. Inversely, the storytelling circle relates essential similarities in Aboriginal and Western histories and current identities, fitting them together. Storytelling circles share fundamental values, beliefs, the disposition from ancestral territories, the context of living under culturally foreign governments, and the threat of assimilation into society's dominant sectors (Baskin, 2005).

According to McGregor (2018) Non-Indigenous researchers involved in Anishinaabe systems-philosophy are further required to recognize links amongst personal projects and community goals. Treaty #3 established a relationship concerning Non-Indigenous settlers and the Anishinaabe living in what is now known as Manitoba and northwestern Ontario. Treaty #3 is not just for research; it is a document that can guide Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, faculty, and staff in producing healthier, more comprehensive, supportive associations and atmospheres for the next generation. Lastly, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada report, first written in 2010 and expanded in 2015, shapes vital features of researchers' engagement, including community consultation, cultural awareness, intellectual property rights, and respectful encounters with knowledge (Truth & reconciliation, 2015).

## Cory

First Nations community engagement should begin with understanding how to engage. For example, according to the Indigenous Corporate Training model, relationship-building keys are a great way to establish trusting, long-lasting partnerships with communities and organizations. ICT was founded by Bob Joseph, a Gwawaenuk Nation member and former associate professor at Royal Roads University in Victoria, British Columbia. His aim in creating ICT was to build positive relationships and understanding between Indigenous and non – Indigenous organizations, companies, and individuals.

Research and understanding, do not defend colonialism, engagement, and consultation continually, acknowledgment of the past, recognition of Indigenous relations between communities and the land, transparency, and communication, providing timely information in a timely fashion; showing strength in integration, and being part of the community are all essential aspects of relationship-building in a trusting and mutually respectful manner (ICT, 2015). Historically, the western perspective has led the way in understanding Indigenous perspectives, which has caused misunderstandings between stakeholders. By way of people like Mr. Joseph, this approach aims to change that perspective into an inclusive relationship that can allow Indigenous researchers to showcase their contributions to Indigenous Knowledge, research, and peacebuilding.

Although these approaches were written concerning governmental and corporate business practice, these are equally applicable to research methodology. Indigenous inclusion in the research process, opportunities for the advancement of Indigenous researchers, and decolonizing scrutiny of Indigenous research (Ryder et al. 2019) are pivotal in developing and maintaining trusting and respectful relations

within the research engagement scope. It is crucial to understand that all participants are stakeholders in the project. I do not believe that indigenous perspective means to overpower Western thought or perspective within the research realm; rather, it seeks to complement, improve, and share a different approach to the western perspective by reciprocating research from the Indigenous standpoint (Ninomiya et al., 2020).

Indigenous participation as a participant, researcher, knowledge keeper, Elder, or leadership, aims to bring experience, tradition, and understanding of the Indigenous experience into the research arena by agreeing to cross-cultural, respectful interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous contributors, allowing for mutually beneficial outcomes (Hermes, 1998). By providing more inclusive opportunities on all levels, all parties can benefit from opportunities, connections, and reconciling past methods that have deteriorated trusting relationships. Collaboration with Indigenous contributors on the various levels of research methodology, the process of engagement, equal employment opportunities, and training can help to build long-lasting relationships that could help solidify future Indigenous-focused project by allowing cultural awareness to help overcome institutional obstacles that keep Indigenous contributors from reaching their full potential (Evans et al., 2009, p. 902).

When I think of "Indigenization," I think of inclusivity in all aspects of sustainability as a partnership, not a takeover of existing systems (Arsenault et al., 2018, p.3. para.2). I consider it more as a "fresh perspective on an existing challenge" (Brocklesby et al., 2018). Suppose we are to move forward in a mutually respectful manner. In that case, we must be willing to set aside old ways of thinking and embrace forward-thinking opportunities as one mindset that can see challenges and opportunities from various perspectives that allow for opportunities that everyone can benefit from in a good way (Wilson, 2001, p. 176). As per the ICT model I mentioned earlier, I believe it is an excellent model to build meaningful and constructive relations between the O of S and Indigenous communities, students, faculty, and Knowledge keepers. I believe recognizing Indigenous dynamics is essential.

For example, as an Indigenous student, I was taught that balance is essential, as the male and female of any community are sacred, both must stand beside one another to lead the way into a more balanced future (Tawiyaka, 1988). This insight was part of my traditional education. I believe the inclusion of all Indigenous perspectives needs to be honored. The Blackfoot, Dene, Stoney, Cree, Saulteaux, Metis, and Inuit perspectives must be allowed to have a voice to aid in a well-rounded Indigenous perspective in

Treaty 6, 7, and 8 territories. Giving these Nations a voice to share their perspective allows for contrasting perspectives that can shed light on the bigger picture, allowing for more holistic approaches toward the overall goals that all stakeholders seek. This was the ancestors' way when negotiating the Sacred treaties from my understanding of my findings and experiential learning. However, this is only my observation, and without more insight into the current dynamics between the O of S and Indigenous partners, I can only surmise.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Once Cory and I completed our research, analysis, and exploration for our topic question, our findings have concluded that we can incorporate the following recommendations to best answer the question, "How can we partner experiential learning with Indigenous communities to achieve sustainability in a decolonizing way? Moreover, how can we positively accomplish this?"

The recommendations/ suggestions are as follows:

### **Confidentiality**

The kinship system is extensive among First Nation communities. Respectful relations are crucial in research when primarily focusing on groups and interviews. They can develop complicated concerns regarding privacy and confidentiality. The researcher may require data storage consulting and what that avenue signifies, considering the limited access to preserve confidentiality.

### **Community-Based Research**

A community-based research methodology can support the research data collecting process. Community-based research seeks to make a productive distinction globally; it can be regarded as attaining social good. Research with Indigenous peoples should involve a formal or informal community ethics evaluation process combined with an institutional assessment, where applicable. As an approach, community-based research qualifies Indigenous communities to oversee and regulate the research agenda. Due to the diversity among Indigenous populations in culture, ideology, values, attitudes, lifestyles, gender, age, and social class, the research process must be specific to the community (McGregor et al., 2018).

Community-based research is an active research approach that can encourage and engage a community and positively influence contributors. Research develops more than a transaction between

researcher and community, as it is about relations and procedures that conclude long-term benefits for both parties. Research should encourage action that constitutes a difference in the lives of Indigenous peoples. According to McGregor et al., (2018) founded on an analysis of community-based evaluation with First Nation communities, the subsequent tactics can be recommended:

- Being mindful of Canada's historical past and its influence on Indigenous populaces
- Appreciating Indigenous populations; acknowledging community leadership
- Offering food and inducements to the community as it is a vital aspect of culture
- Conferring a research topic and employing suitable data collection processes, and
- Establishing an ethical place for conversation and in respect of community principles

## Community Champion

According to Phillips & Phillips-Beck (2011), establishing a central group of community champions is vital in mobilizing the community to promote leadership and advocacy for policy change. Also, researchers' appropriate methods to engage a champion, who can promote from within the community and link the researcher to others, are indispensable. A community champion can support a researcher in obtaining a conference with Council and Chief, and introducing the researcher to key staff members. Additionally, a community champion can determine community members for a research navigation committee and help traverse a First Nation community's ins and outs. Similarly, a community champion can also be identified as a gatekeeper who vigorously supports and fosters respectful research.

## Data Collection Methods

In cooperation with the community, the researcher should create the most suitable method for collecting data. In some cases, oral interviews may be desirable to written surveys; and here, researchers could recommend performing interviews at a possible health or community venue if participants prefer this to their home.

## Decolonizing Citation

Often, Indigenous ways of knowing, precisely, history and oral teachings, are invalidated in academia by citational politics. Researchers should commit to identifying and establishing current models for citing Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers in academia. Delaurier-lyle (2020) emphasizes that researchers should also be cognizant and mindful of current initiatives in libraries and elsewhere to create



templates for citing Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Also, discourse on Indigenous citation must be revered in university circles' perspective of devaluation.

## **Decolonizing Framework**

A decolonizing framework is a meaningful way to guide community-based participatory action research because it "challenges traditional western ways of doing research and requires the reformulation of underlying assumptions and methods" (Bartlett et al., 2007, p. 2371). The frameworks' essential principles include negotiating research relationships, utilizing Indigenized methods, recognizing reciprocal capacity building, and crediting Indigenous knowledge.

## **EDI (Equity, Diversity, Inclusion)**

According to the government of Canada website (2020), incorporating EDI to research with communities and individuals is a necessity. Equity guarantees equal opportunities for all peoples and the elimination of systemic obstacles. This comes with the comprehension of barriers encountered by underrepresented groups, such as the LGBTQ2+ community. Diversity acknowledges identity, sex, class, gender, ethnicity, age, etc., which are vital to sustaining distinction amidst research. Lastly, Inclusion pertains to recognizing values and reverence for every individual regarding their contributions, which entails incorporating team members' full assistance.

## **Informed Consent/ TCPS 2**

It is integral to locate the individual/ community and incorporate informed consent as the whole process may become problematic when gathering data. For example, cultural information can be taken out of context by western perspectives, and conclusions may be inaccurately drawn (Battiste & Henderson 2000). Therefore, incorporating the TCPS 2 while gathering data on the Tri-Council Policy statement's ethical relationships is vital when research involves humans. Keeping TCPS 2 in mind while conducting research is vital when working with individuals from your community. The groundwork basis of TCPS 2 is the importance of respect for human dignity. This value is conveyed via three fundamental principles: respect for persons, concern for welfare, and justice (CIHR, 2010).

## Nipissing University

Incorporating and implementing Nipissing University's Community Engagement plan involves researchers ensure respectful engagement with the First Nation they interact with during the process. This plan is the data being generated is returned to the communities, ensures that communities are aware of the work, and supports relationship development. In this case, the Chief and Council also give the community authority to decide who is permitted to share their story. To date, this extends to colonialism and stands in the way of epistemological humility and meaningful education for all Canadians (McGregor, D., Restoule, J., & Johnston, R. 2018).

## Partnerships

This involves collaborating with First Nations during all research phases. A research committee can significantly facilitate this process. The community can discuss benefits such as capacity building, economic enticements via research positions, and safeguarding the allotment of the community's research budget. The goal is to build respectful, reciprocal, and long-lasting partnerships that benefit all stakeholders.

## Qualities and Seven Principles/ Frameworks

Introduce fundamental qualities to research and consider including openness, authenticity, honesty, and commitment to represent participants' experiences accurately. Including Indigenous voices and epistemology in the center of the research process recognizes and respects full tribal sovereignty, ownership, control, and the impact of historical factors. Moreover, incorporate Indigenous ways of knowing and being. In addition to these essential qualities, we felt that it is imperative to include the 7 Indigenous frameworks and Principles, which entail respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity interrelatedness, and synergy correlating to the frameworks. In comparison, the principles entail humility, respect, wisdom, courage, truth, honesty, and love (Archibald, J.-A., Lee-Morgan, J., De, S. J., & Smith, L. T. 2019).

## Relationship Building

Bartlett and her colleagues (2007) emphasize that research commences before presenting your proposal to the funding affiliate. This concept entails early team meetings, calls, and emails between the community partners and academic agents. There are various levels to relationship building in First Nation communities: leadership, band administration, staff, knowledge keepers, Elders, and community

members. These connections/relations may take years to cultivate, foster, and progress (Schinke et al., 2008).

## Self to Environment

Traditional Indigenous Research Methodologies go beyond the borders of western thought. It is fluid and personal to each individual, as it suggests bridging self to the environment. In connecting oneself to the environment, the concepts of research and the importance of sustainable development goals (SDG's) become more personal and meaningful to the researcher in recognizing how and why we must respect our relationships with our environment and each other.

## Storywork/ Narrative Methodology

Other specific methodologies that can be utilized in approaching Indigenous communities can also include Indigenous Story work, created by Archibald (2008), and narrative inquiry, developed by Jean Clandinin and Michael Connelly (2000). Archibald's Indigenous Storywork model (2008) places additional emphasis on respectful, trusting relationships. Indigenous Storywork grants "First Nations storytellers to use their personal life experiences as teaching stories like how they use traditional stories" (Archibald, 2008, p. 112). In contrast, narrative inquiry is centered on stories that can erupt anywhere along the continuum of an individual's life cycle. The narrative inquiry engages the researcher in conversations with the participants and analyzes personal stories. Both Indigenous Storywork and narrative inquiry support respectful, trusting relationships with the community and participants.

## Sustainability

When we think of sustainability, we give serious consideration to the Indigenous concept of the seven generations. In many Indigenous practices, we are taught to pray for the seven generations to come, that we continue to steward the land and its resources so they have a world that will sustain them. According to McGill University (n.d) sustainability suggests meeting their demands devoid of compromising forthcoming generations' capacity to meet their demands. The University utilizes the three pillars of sustainability which incorporate the environment, economy, and society. These concepts maintain balance and independence while having access to resources to preserve families and communities in a healthy and protected facet.

## Treaty #3

According to our research, treaty #3 could be applied to model relationships between universities and Indigenous communities and their representatives. Treaty #3 demands that Non-Indigenous researchers collaborate with Anishinaabe communities (McGregor et al., 2018).

## PLANS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISSEMINATION

The purpose of our dissemination is to inform, educate, raise awareness, and promote our results via our research. The topic question pertains to “How can we partner experiential learning with Indigenous communities to advance sustainability in a decolonizing way, and how can we positively accomplish this?” The message to our topic question aims to be disseminated in a decolonizing manner while concentrating on achieving sustainability partnerships with Indigenous communities. Additionally, our suggestions and recommendations align with our findings and goals.

The audience we endeavour to engage encompasses the community, scholars, organizations, and interested readers via an inductive qualitative, experiential, and explanatory approach. As students, our limitations to experiential and exploratory learning appear from being unable to interact directly with a community due to time constraints. Also, implementing the suggested solutions and recommendations is limited to many factors that can include access to a budget, knowledge, data, and other available resources.

After careful consideration, review, and deliberation with our project partner, we are authorized to recognize Aviva Fialkow’s role from the O of S in this project and utilize her name without anonymity. Additionally, as per our current sharing agreement and consent form, all research data gathered within this report, alongside all parameters, may be shared with anyone who may find it beneficial.

*We gratefully thank Aviva Fialkow, the O of S, Adela Kincaid, and our peer reviewers for their time, contributions, feedback, approval, and support throughout this project.*

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## APPENDICES

### Consent form

#### **Researchers/ Students:**

Cory Whitecap - undergraduate student, International Indigenous Studies - [Cory.whitecap@ucalgary.ca](mailto:Cory.whitecap@ucalgary.ca)

Bia Pasqualini - undergraduate student, International Indigenous Studies -

[Biagio.pasqualini@ucalgary.ca](mailto:Biagio.pasqualini@ucalgary.ca)

**Supervisor:** Dr. Adela Kincaid, Instructor, [atkincai@ucalgary.ca](mailto:atkincai@ucalgary.ca)

**Title of Project:** How do we approach Indigenous communities to partner with them for experiential learning for sustainability in a decolonizing way? How do we do this "in a good way"?

This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you require more specifics about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study. Participation is entirely voluntary and confidential.

### Purpose of the Study

Our current role in this project is to contribute our shared knowledge to learn about the Office of Sustainability and document possible sustainable Indigenous projects to SDGs. The project will develop resolutions and proposals to prospective Indigenous sustainable projects and their implications via various research methods. This project's essential activity will be to gather data from scholarly articles and other publications concerning sustainability, communicate our findings with each other/ organization, and implement the collected research via a presentation. Our goal is to contribute our combined research methods and knowledge, pursuing potential sustainable solutions to developmental challenges.

### What will I be asked to do?

Respondents will be asked to advise on the project. They will also be asked to participate in one interview. The questions will be centered around their organization. The respondent will be asked to expand on their organization's goals, their future goals, what they hope to accomplish, how they currently work with and for Indigenous communities, individuals, or students, and what types of student projects would benefit them. With participant consent, a zoom will be used to record the interview so that the responses can be transcribed. The interview will be approximately 45 minutes long. We may contact you for a follow-up interview to ensure that your answers were correctly interpreted. Your participation in the follow-up is completely voluntary. Participation is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate altogether, may refuse to participate in parts of the study, may decline to answer any and all questions, and may withdraw from the study at any time.

### **What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?**

No, personal identifying information will be collected. Should you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide information about your organization's role. If you agree to an audiotaped/ videotaped interview, access to recordings will never be shown publicly. The supervisor and researchers will be the only people with access to the recorded interview and the transcribed interview. There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some, or none of them. Please review each of these options and choose Yes or No:

I grant permission to be audio-taped:	Yes: ___ No: ___
I grant permission to be videotaped:	Yes: ___ No: ___
I grant permission to have my company's name used:	Yes: ___ No: ___
I wish to remain anonymous:	Yes: ___ No: ___
I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym:	Yes: ___ No: ___
The pseudonym I choose for myself is: _____	
You may quote me and use my name:	Yes: ___ No: ___

*You can revise the list of choices as necessary to accommodate the circumstances of your research. You can also add choices that are relevant to your circumstances.*

### **Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?**

Risks, harms, and inconveniences may include time taken out of your workday and emotional or mental concerns that you are sharing information about the organization. There is a minimal risk that you may feel embarrassed, uncomfortable, or anxious while being interviewed. The results (including a report and presentation) will be given to your organization and will not be shared unless explicit consent to do so is obtained from you prior to dissemination. There are no costs associated with your participation.

The benefit of this research partnership is that we hope to provide you with several project ideas that will help advance your goals to support Indigenous youth, community, or affairs. This research will outline future student projects to help advance your goals.

### **What Happens to the Information I Provide?**

Participants are free to withdraw until March 30, 2021, after data collection. Withdrawal from this research is no longer possible after March 30, 2021. The interview information you provided will be deleted and destroyed if you withdraw from the study, but information about your organization compiled through published sources (online, reports, books, articles, etc.) will remain as part of the report.

We will refer to you through a general title as a representative/staff member/researcher of the organization. No one except the researchers and the supervisor will be allowed to see or hear any answers to the questionnaire or the interview tape. Please keep in mind that as we learn to code and transcribe what you shared, other students in the class might see or hear snippets of the interview. There are no names on the questionnaire. Your interview answers will be summarized for any presentation or publication of results and will not be shared without your explicit consent. The questionnaires are kept on a password-protected computer and only accessible by the researcher and the supervisor. The anonymous data will be stored for this semester on a computer, at which time it will be permanently erased.

The following options can be added and adapted to the consent form, as needed:

Would you like to receive a summary of the study's results? Yes: \_\_\_ No: \_\_\_

If yes, please provide your contact information (e-mail address, or phone number)

Are you interested in being contacted about a follow-up interview, with the understanding that you can always decline the request? Yes: \_\_\_ No: \_\_\_

### Signatures

Your signature on this form indicates that 1) you understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) you agree to participate in the research project.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's name: (please print)

Cory Whitecap & Bia Pasqualini

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Date: Feb.11.21

### Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Cory Whitecap & Bia Pasqualini,  
 Political Science, International Indigenous Studies  
[Cory.Whitecap1@ucalgary.ca](mailto:Cory.Whitecap1@ucalgary.ca) – [Biagio.pasqualini@ucalgary.ca](mailto:Biagio.pasqualini@ucalgary.ca)  
 and Dr. Adela Kincaid, International Indigenous Studies, [atkincai@ucalgary.ca](mailto:atkincai@ucalgary.ca)

If you have any concerns about how you have been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services Office, the University of Calgary at 403.220.6289 or 403.220.8640; email [cfreb@ucalgary.ca](mailto:cfreb@ucalgary.ca). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.



## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What responsibilities do you oversee in your role in this office?

What is your definition of the word sustainable success?

What connection to sustainability and Indigenous Knowledge does your office focus on?

What are the organization's indigenization plans pertaining to SDG's?

How do equity, diversity, and inclusion play into this for Indigenous / non - Indigenous interactions and relationships regarding sustainable development goals?

How can Indigenous-focused projects help with sustainability?

What is the office of sustainability doing for the creation of long-term Indigenous research opportunity development?

What is the sustainability office's vision when working with Indigenous researchers, what kind of projects, and who oversees the work?

What kind of projects would you like to see in the foreseeable future regarding Indigenous sustainability?

What type of application process does a student need to go through when applying to the sustainability office for assistance/support?

What does reconciliation mean to the organization?

What might reconciliation look like in terms of student project ideas?

How is the information compiled, refined, and where is it presented for public access (students/faculty)?

What kind of research methods do you utilize? Can you suggest any for us?

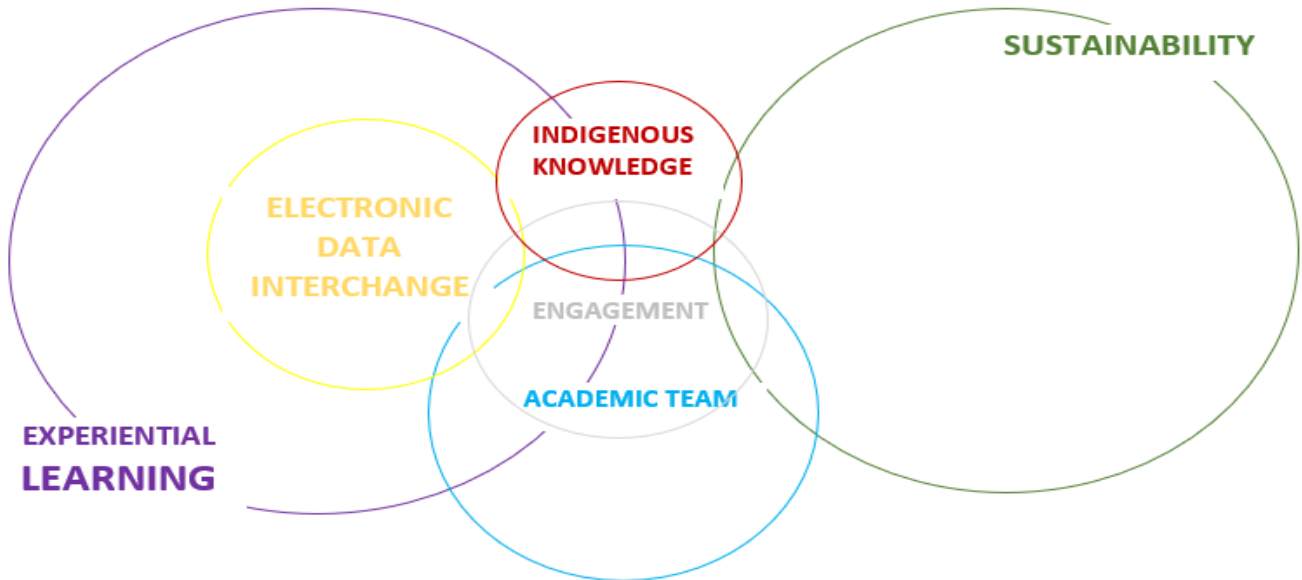
What kind of partnerships moving forward are you most interested in?

Is there anything that we have not asked that we should have?

Is there an established list of partners with the sustainability office, climate action, organizations, etc.?

## WORLD MAPS

**Cory's Map** – Coding and analysis exclusively based on the first part of the interview transcription

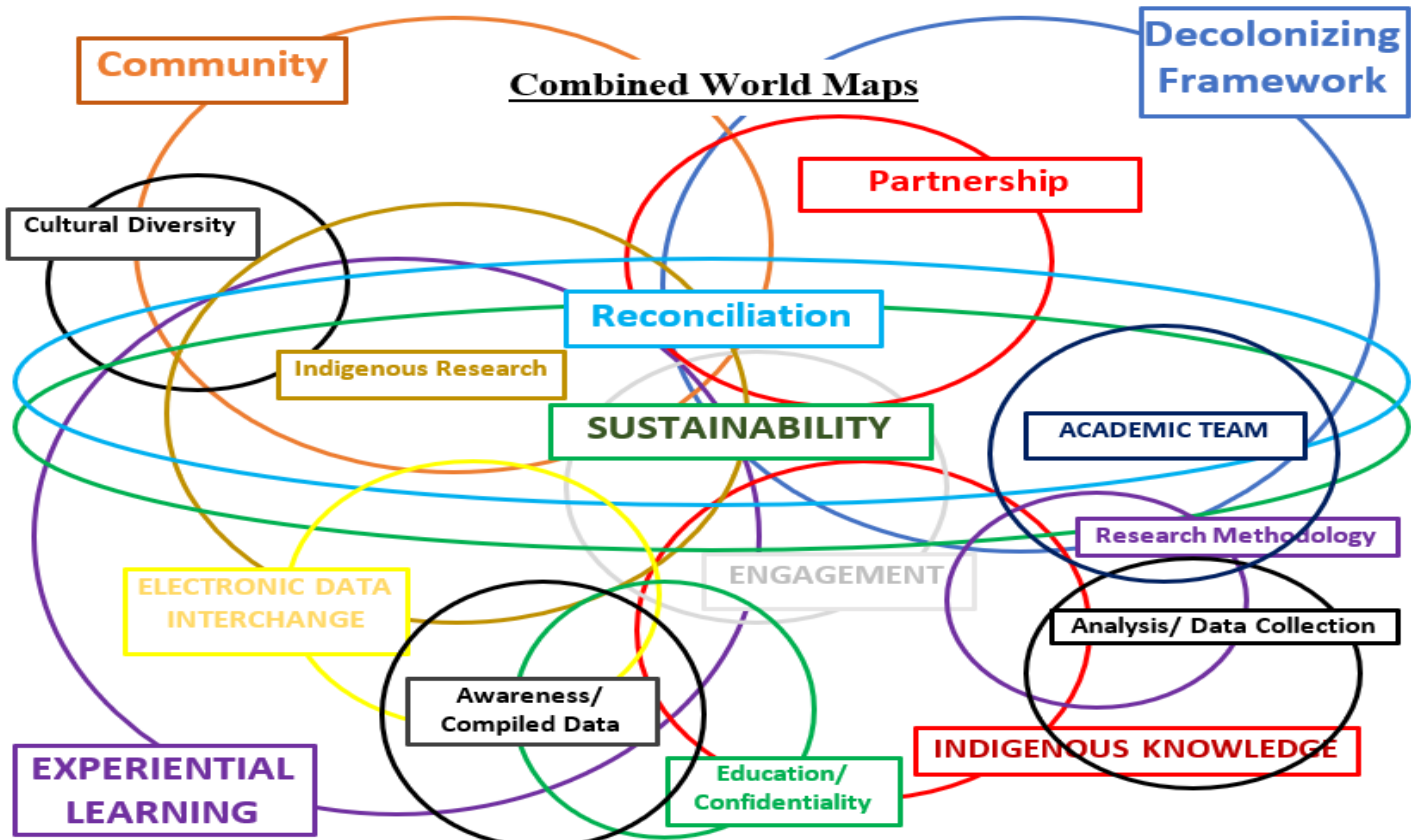


**Bia's Map** – Coding and analysis based on the second part of the interview transcription with additional files, including pdfs, articles, publications, personal and combined notes.



AMB - Anishinaabe mino-bimaadiziwin  
 ICT - Indigenous Corporate Training Model  
 O of S - Office of Sustainability  
 O of IE - Office of Indigenous Engagement

SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals  
 UN - United Nations  
 UNDRIP - United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous People  
 WRM - Wildfire Research Methodology



### Brief Analysis of Combined Maps

With the combination and integration of both maps, we can see much overlap amongst the themes. As you can observe, the larger circles represent our primary themes, in which we chose to focus on our coding. In comparison, the secondary and third, smaller-sized circles/ ovals represent the themes that correlate/ fit into the main themes' larger aspect. It is imperative to acknowledge that this overall creation of combined maps was endeavored several times, as we attempted to deduce and refine our findings for comprehension and clarity.

Additionally, by combining both codings/ data analysis, we could distinctively choose better themes that fit our project, world map and agree on the overall process of critical elements. Upon deducing our data and analyzing the topics, we agreed the previously mentioned themes were our core, specifically, experiential learning, sustainability, decolonizing framework, and Indigenous knowledge. Derived from our topic question, other equally important unearthed themes such as partnerships, reconciliation community, education, and awareness, were respectfully placed within those themes.