FACT SHEET 1

This fact sheet series responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC) call for reconciliation through collaborative projects, education and research. There is growing awareness of the necessity for researchers to engage with Indigenous and Western ideas about what constitutes knowledge, how we come to know things, and how multiple knowledge systems can work together.

These fact sheets briefly consider aspects of Indigenous and Western ways of knowing. They explore the potential for linking Indigenous and Western approaches to knowledge creation, provide examples, and identify risks. In the fact sheets, intersectionality is explained and explored as an important complementary concept that can strengthen analysis and support the work of truth and reconciliation. Seven principles are presented to help guide scholars, policy-makers, and others interested in doing research that is attentive to reconciliation through an intersectional lens. Twelve research methods are illustrated as examples of how to do research that links Indigenous and Western ways of knowing, and intersectionality.

Our research answered the following questions:

1. What research frameworks draw together Indigenous and Western approaches to knowledge creation?
2. How does intersectionality relate to these frameworks?
3. What methodologies (i.e. principles and methods) reflect important and shared values within these research frameworks and intersectionality?

Approach

We conducted an extensive review of academic and community literature to uncover theoretical and empirical research. The literature search focused on North America, and included a few key sources from countries such as New Zealand, with similar colonial histories. We also held conversations with 20 Indigenous wisdom keepers and key informants as a way of respecting knowledge outside of academic literature, and to counterbalance the dominance of Western science in published articles.
Five Key Messages

The results of our literature review and conversations with wisdom keepers and key informants led to five key messages:

1. **Truth and reconciliation requires investments in First Nation/Inuit/Métis-specific knowledge systems.** In many cases, reconciliation will require mutual learning from, between, and across Indigenous and Western knowledge systems, without privileging Western knowledge, or appropriating Indigenous knowledge. This type of learning can be encouraged and supported within universities, through education and training, and by grassroots and public organizations. It must respect and recognize the diversity of Indigenous approaches and avoid assuming there is a singular or pan-Indigenous approach, just as there is not a singular Western approach.

2. **A wealth of scholarship has responded to the challenge of engaging both Indigenous and Western approaches to knowledge creation by creating models we describe as “linking frameworks”**. Frameworks used by researchers and policy makers should reflect the specific context and conceptual landscape in which they work. This will enable more respectful and effective reconciliation efforts, grounded in space and time, and therefore more relevant to the worldviews of research participants.

3. **Governments across Canada committed to moving towards Nation-to-Nation relationships with Indigenous peoples, at the same time as they started applying intersectional gender-based analyses to make policy decisions.** These two commitments significantly build on one another. Scholars can explore the results of linking these two fields to show how they can be of mutual benefit, and what their differences yield.

4. **The results of our research highlight seven principles as the basis of both intersectional analysis and the “linking frameworks” identified in this report: Relationality, Reciprocity, Reflexivity, Respect, Reverence, Responsivity, and Responsibility.** These principles offer guidance in research, and common ground for collective action and solidarity building between Indigenous and intersectional advocacy groups. The principles draw on existing ethical guidelines governing research and collaboration. This synthesis is part of that broader conversation.

5. **Scholarship that seeks to rectify inequality, build on different ways of knowing, and consider intersectionality, changes not only how we work (our methods), and how we talk about or share our work (knowledge mobilization), but also how we exist as reflexive and relational beings.** Publishers, funders, and educators can encourage a reflexive stance in scholarly materials and graduate student training. They can also support community-based collaborations with cross-knowledge systems research. This may require changes to who is eligible to receive and hold research funds.

All five of our key messages have implications for a range of audiences including policy makers across all levels of government, scholars, educators, research funders, private, public and community organizations, as well as Indigenous governments and organizations.
What this means for…

Research Policy-Makers
Universities, governments, funders, publishers

- Engage Indigenous approaches to knowledge creation in collaboration with Western and intersectional approaches.
- Avoid superficial understandings of Indigenous knowledge systems, Western knowledge systems, and intersectional methodology.
- Better understand and develop frameworks that already exist to facilitate work that links knowledge systems in a way that does not further inequity or appropriation.
- Look for, or develop, frameworks or linking tools that reflect the specifics of a research context to maximize relevance and efficacy, without compromising cultural integrity.
- Apply the seven principles identified above to motivate, guide, inform, and govern knowledge creation and knowledge mobilization.
- Account for the time intensive work of applying the seven principles in tenure, promotion and merit review.
- Be open to unconventional formats for knowledge sharing forums and make reflexivity standard in research texts.
- Consider broadening the applicant pool to include more applicants outside academia.

Scholars and Educators

- Encourage and support students’ use of multiple knowledge systems and intersectional analysis.
- Address in curricula, and investigate through scholarship, the linking frameworks and seven principles, and the relevance of intersectionality to truth and reconciliation.

Community Organizations

- Use the seven principles as a basis of unity around which to develop solidarity and build partnerships between Indigenous and intersectional advocates.
- Provide leadership in pursuing research, informed by the seven principles.

Conclusion

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls on governments, funding agencies, universities and Canadians to undertake efforts to redress the legacy of colonization and residential schools in Canadian history. This requires collaborative projects, education, research, and funding to include Indigenous approaches to knowledge. The onus is on settlers to learn more about, and engage in a good way, with Indigenous ways of knowing.

The five fact sheets in this series offer ideas about how to link Indigenous and Western approaches to research, including seven principles that will help us undertake collaborative and intersectional research.

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i It is imperative to highlight here that the Indigenous ideas which academic privilege has pulled into these frameworks emerged from very specific contexts that are not generalizable. As one key informant told us, “It destroys Indigenous cultural fabric to propagate these frameworks universally.” (M. Atleo, personal communication, November 30, 2017)

ii Our use of the expression “in a good way” refers to the ideas and values that underpin Indigenous teachings of “the good life.” In an article called, Seeking Mino-pimatasiwin (the Good Life): An Aboriginal approach to social work practice, Hart (2004) highlights the results of an extensive review of literature and the knowledge of Elders to describe the Good Life as including attention to wholeness, balance, relationships, harmony, growth, and healing, and as being informed by the key values of sharing and respect.