Positionality and Research: “Two-Eyed Seeing” With a Rural Ktaqmkuk Mi’kmaw Community

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Abstract
As evident from the original proposals for self-negotiation from the Federation of Newfoundland Indians, the formation of the Qalipu Mi’kmaq First Nation represented a small victory for Ktaqmkuk Mi’kmaq: recognition. Validation of the existence of Ktaqmkuk Mi’kmaq outside of Miawpukek was a small step toward decolonization yet cannot be a panacea for reconciliation. This study was a collaborative project in the Mi’kmaw community of Ewipkek through the No’kmaq Village Band and Elder Calvin White, a known champion of Mi’kmaw rights in the province. This project emerged from a collaborative research effort between the community of Ewipkek and Grenfell Campus, Memorial University. This article presents current approaches, principles, and considerations for researchers working with Indigenous communities, drawing from both academic literature and the collaborative experience working with the community of Ewipkek. This collaborative project describes the different characteristics of a Western research paradigm versus an Indigenous research paradigm that can support the application of the Two-Eyed Seeing framework.

Keywords
community-based research, case study, oral histories, social justice, narrative

Introduction
The above quote from Shawn Wilson, an Opaskwayak Cree scholar from northern Manitoba, underlines the rationale behind this article exploring some approaches to research and knowledge gathering with an Indigenous community. I cite his words as a reminder of my responsibilities as a non-Indigenous researcher working with an Indigenous community. As a collaborative project, I partnered with the community of Ewipkek, a Mi’kmaw community in western Ktaqmkuk, to explore the ways in which traditional knowledge in the community could be used to promote meaningful engagement in research or development projects. Emerging from many different Indigenous scholars, traditional knowledge in this article refers to the stories and narratives shared by community participants depicting the relationship and understanding of their environment (Absolon, 2016; Bartlett et al., 2012; Corbière, 2000).

I will discuss my positionality in further detail in the next section; however, I identify as a non-Indigenous researcher with mixed English and Mi’kmaw ancestry. Although I do not deny the Mi’kmaw identity of some of my ancestors, I assert that it is inappropriate to position myself as an Indigenous scholar when my lived experiences have been that of a White settler. It is my responsibility to reflect and recognize that my worldview is different than an Indigenous worldview. My ancestry alone does not permit me to identify as an Indigenous scholar working with Ewipkek, I must...
approach research in a collaborative way that shows an understanding of the shared histories between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Findlay (2016) is a non-Indigenous scholar who self-identifies as an “ethical ally” to his Indigenous colleagues with whom he has “relearned” the implications of his assumptions of research as a European scholar. His work with Indigenous collaborators and colleagues has shaped his academic career in Canada, and he underlines the importance of Indigenous leadership in research and “conceptual frameworks and protocols unique to particular First Nations, their particular histories and territories” (Findlay, 2016, p. 86). To address the need for a unique framework and protocol specific to the community of Ewipkek, the overall research question that this article seeks to explore is: “How can a non-Indigenous researcher apply Two-Eyed Seeing as an appropriate framework in collaborating with a rural Mi’kma’w community in western Ktaqmkuk?” Narrowing my research question to a specific location situates the response in a local context and thus holds the most meaning for the relevant community.

Through a review of literature produced by Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, I argue that as a non-Indigenous researcher, a Two-Eyed Seeing approach to research can be a nonoppressive and empowering framework used to structure research. This article seeks to further explore an Indigenous research paradigm as it implicates non-Indigenous researchers in the field and will demonstrate research designed with a community. I first provide a detailed overview of my own positionality in the project before contextualizing research and its use as a colonial tool. Two-Eyed Seeing is then proposed as an appropriate framework to include both an Indigenous and Western research paradigm. Finally, I draw some conclusions from the reviewed literature and stories from the community and present several recommendations for researchers when working with Indigenous communities.

The level of detail that I provide of my own background and positionality is relevant in this article for two reasons. First, personally and professionally I am conscious of the tension that I feel in my own identity. Second, I hope that the depth I provide will illustrate an appropriate level of reflection that researchers must do to recognize their own positionality and privilege before, during, and after working with Indigenous communities or collaborators on a project.

This project emerged from a collaborative research effort between the community of Ewipkek and Grenfell Campus, Memorial University. As seen in Figure 1, Ewipkek is a community that is made up of smaller communities in the same area, all connected by the same access road. For the purposes of this project, the place name Ewipkek will be used generally, however, this refers to the surrounding area as well. Partnering with Elder Calvin White, a known champion of Mi’kmaw rights in Ktaqmkuk, we were able to gain a deeper understanding of the implications of using traditional knowledge in a rural Ktaqmkuk Mi’kmaw community. This served as the basis for

Figure 1. Map depicting the communities that make up Ewipkek, Ktaqmkuk (McInnes, 2019).
my master’s research. For the purposes of this article, traditional knowledge is considered as the local knowledge shared from community participants in Ewipkek through oral narratives of their relationship to and understanding of their environment (Absolon, 2016; Black & McBean, 2016; Corbière, 2000). Although other terms are referenced that may refer to traditional knowledge, such as Indigenous knowledge (IK; Bartlett et al., 2012), traditional knowledge will be the term used for consistency in this article.

Despite being one of the most researched peoples in the world, Indigenous people have only recently had their voice heard at an academic level (Fredericks, 2008; Wilson, 2008). Fredericks (2008) states that although Indigenous people are investigated by researchers from around the world, “the vast majority of this research has been carried out by non-Indigenous people” (p. 114). Fredericks (2008) describes an environment that exists in which Indigenous peoples can be disenfranchised and deceived in order to further the interests of the researcher. While this type of research environment does not always occur, many Indigenous scholars corroborate similar narratives of non-Indigenous researchers entering an Indigenous community (Goodman et al., 2018; L. T. T. R. Smith, 1999). In response to the demand for Indigenous approaches to research by Wilson (2008), this article discusses some considerations for researchers working with an Indigenous community.

**Positionality and Background**

To begin, and for reasons that I will elaborate on below, it is important to provide some of my personal and professional background on my academic journey thus far. My name is Brady Reid, born and raised in western Ktaqmkuk, and I identify as a settler with mixed English/Mi’kmaw ancestry, and throughout my graduate studies in environmental policy, I have been able to reflect upon my identity and its implications in my research. Until recently, I identified as an Indigenous researcher under the assumption that holding a status card acted as justification. However, spending some time in my hometown and working with many incredible champions of Indigenous rights, I have grown to see the error in my initial claim.

During my teenage years, negotiations were happening between the government of Canada and the then Federation of Newfoundland Indians (FNI) that led to the creation of the Qalipu Mi’kmaq First Nation in 2011. At this time, I learned that my ancestry is mixed, sharing both English and Mi’kmaw ancestors. Many families in the region were conducting similar genealogical research, exploring ties to Mi’kmaw ancestors to assert Indian status through the Indian Act (1985) under the newly formed Qalipu Mi’kmaq First Nation. Once proven through church records and old birth certificates, I was told that I was an Indian. In 2017, during the reexamination of the enrolment process, I was served a letter that stated that I met the “criteria” to be enrolled as a status-Indian. To be brief, in the late 18th century, my ancestor Ralph Brake left Yetminster, England and sailed for western Ktaqmkuk. Settling in Elmastlukwek, Ralph married Jane Matthews who was known as a local Mi’kmaw woman.

Although controversial as this may seem now, I did not fully understand the implications of this new part of my identity. The formal recognition of the Qalipu Mi’kmaq First Nation empowered the reclamation of Mi’kmaw culture in this region of Ktaqmkuk, and I noticed more members of my family beginning to participate in Mi’kmaw cultural activities (Robinson, 2012). At an young age, I had little knowledge about the history of the Mi’kmak, and I did not gain this stronger understanding until recently, through my work with the community of Ewipkek. Without spending too much time on this history, I will recommend further reading on the history of the Ktaqmkuk Mi’kmaq with the works of Jackson (1993) and Wetzel (1995).

Throughout this project, I predominantly worked with Elder Calvin White, the coinvestigator of this project and most recently a recipient of the Order of Canada (for more information, see https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/calvin-white-order-of-canada-1.5001759). Elder White’s knowledge that he shared through stories helped me explore my own identity and I quickly recognized that I was uncomfortable referring to myself as an “Indigenous scholar.” Interestingly, Elder White and I share common ancestors many generations back, yet we do not share similar lived experiences: Elder White describes the community of Ewipkek as a rural, Mi’kmaw community, whereby culture, community, and identity are not separate notions, and I grew up in a community that was urban and I held little connection to any Mi’kmaw culture. Not to undermine the families in my town that always knew of their heritage and were shunned from sharing their culture, but the formation of Qalipu saw many people reclaiming identities that were lost generations ago. Elder White tells stories of the challenges faced in his community due to the negative, racist attitudes toward Mi’kmaq held by non-Indigenous Newfoundlanders in surrounding communities. The community of Ewipkek persisted against these ignorant behaviors and remained true to their Mi’kmaw heritage (C. White, personal communication, January 26, 2019). My lived experiences among the dominant, settler population in Newfoundland shielded me from racial slurs and “othering” due to my heritage. I cannot liken the loss of the culture from my Mi’kmaw ancestors to the everyday persecution of those facing colonialism today and throughout their lifetimes.

While the negative experiences described by Elder White do not define Indigeneity, it is important to recognize their implications. Colonialism has been rather uniformly applied by settlers across Canada and the world as an oppressive tool used to deny and reshape cultural expression, language survival, and self-determination of Indigenous peoples (M. Battiste, 2000). These racist, oppressive realities of colonialism continue to persist today, and it is important to recognize how these realities may shape the work of Indigenous scholars (Absolon, 2011; Fredericks, 2008; Greymorning, 2004). For example, Absolon (2011) states that she feels “empowered and triumphant that I, that ‘supposedly unsuccessful’ Indian child, would...
be publishing a book on Indigenous ways of coming to know” (p. 10). Indigenous scholars speak from a voice that was once extinguished and this is relevant when considering my identity and positionality in research.

Relying on blood quantum or genealogical evidence as a marker of Indigeneity should be questioned at this point. Until recently, I remained rather ignorant to the meaning of becoming a status-Indian⁴ and its impacts in other contexts across Canada. For example, Gaudry and Leroux (2017) explore the notion of Indigeneity in two self-identified “Métis” communities in Nova Scotia and Québec and argue that this recent “discovery” of Métis heritage has an unwavering investment in the white settler-colonial project” (p. 126). The authors explain how these “Métis” communities are asserting rights against the Indigenous peoples who have endured colonialism for generations.

The two “Métis” communities discussed by Gaudry and Leroux (2017) generally share the story of a “long-ago mixed-ness with an Indigenous ancestor” and the authors challenge this notion. Gaudry and Leroux (2017) state that “the reduction of Métis to such a bio-historical process is at odds with recent scholarship that situates the emergence of the Métis Nation in a specific time and space well away from large-scale European settlement” (p. 126). Although there is clear evidence supporting the Mi’kmaw heritage of western Ktaqmkuk, critical thought may help locate one’s intention in applying for Status. The significance of my positionality and the context of this project in western Ktaqmkuk relate to the overall discussion about the validity of traditional knowledge in decision making. Recognizing my background as that of a settler in a colonized world helps inform my choice to not define myself as an Indigenous scholar based on my ancestry. In an era of truth and reconciliation, it is often seen that “truth” is loosely defined. Truth must be spoken by the person to whom it is true, and my truth, which comes from my lived experiences, does not speak to that of the Mi’kmaw community in which I work, so it would be inappropriate for me to assume that role.

A common theme in Indigenous scholarship is the transparency of the writer’s background that has culminated in the literature that is produced. For example, many Indigenous scholars introduce themselves in their writing to give broader context to the concepts that are discussed through their work (Absolon, 2011; Fredericks, 2008; Greymorning, 2004; Iwama et al., 2009; Kovach, 2009). Margaret Kovach (2009), an Indigenous scholar from the Plains Cree and Salteaux peoples, states the following in her prologue,

within Indigenous writing, a prologue structures space for introductions while serving a bridging function for non-Indigenous readers. It is a precursory signal to the careful reader that woven throughout the varied forms of our writing—analytical, reflective, expository—there will be story, for our story is who we are. (pp. 3–4)

The above excerpt provides some rationale for this introduction to my paper as sort of a bridging device for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous readers to better understand my positionality as a researcher and how this relates to the project. Introduction of self-reflection, or “researcher-in-relation” as described by Kovach in Peltier (2018), appear as an important part of the writing process as it begins to build the relationship between the writer and the reader (Wilson, 2008). Wilson states that “as I [Wilson] cannot know beforehand who will read this book, I cannot be sure of the relationships that readers might hold with me or the ideas I share” (p. 6). Wilson (2008) highlights the divide between reader and writer wherein I, as the writer, am unable to know who reads any work that I produce. It is fair to assume that my readers come from a range of backgrounds with varied levels of cultural understanding (or misunderstanding).

To mitigate any potential misunderstandings, it is my contention that a conversation about my identity and my journey can provide a foundation upon which readers can build. Wilson (2008), like other Indigenous scholars, discusses the need to create a “common ground” upon which both writer and reader can exist to ensure that the reader better understands the assertions of the writer. Presenting background on my identity and how this has shaped my research to this point is my effort to create the “common ground.”

I have been incredibly lucky to work with strong Indigenous leaders throughout my graduate studies and discuss with them the implications of my identity within research. As a non-Indigenous researcher with Mi’kmaw ancestry working with members of a Mi’kmaw community, I must recognize my positionality and keep open communication with community partners throughout the research process. Wilson (2008) demands that researchers respect a community’s code of conduct and worldview. Open communication and dialogue with partners in the community has helped to ensure that my research is conducted in a way that respects, empowers, and validates the knowledge that is produced therein.

Qalipu Mi’kmaw First Nation

The Qalipu Mi’kmaw First Nation (Qalipu) was formally recognized on September 22, 2011, through negotiations between the Federal Government and the FNI. This negotiation was the result of decades of Mi’kmaw rights advocacy in Ktaqmkuk. In 1981, the Federal Government recognized Miawpukek First Nation, a Mi’kmaw community on the south coast of Ktaqmkuk. As a newly formed Band under the Indian Act, Miawpukek withdrew from the FNI and Mi’kmaw living on the west coast of Ktaqmkuk saw little progress in their assertion of rights until the 1990s. A proposal was given to the Federal Government called the “2002 Mi’kmaw Regime” and negotiations continued throughout the early 2000s. At this point, FNI represented 10,500 members in communities around Ktaqmkuk, and when an Agreement in Principle was drafted on November 30, 2007, a referendum was held with the FNI membership and the agreement passed with 90% approval (Qalipu, 2016).

After the Agreement in Principle was ratified, an extremely complicated and lengthy enrollment process began. For
brevity, I will just share some highlights of this process. Nearly 25,000 applications for membership were fielded by the Qalipu Enrollment Committee with 11,000 having been approved. An Order in Council on September 22, 2011, marked the formal creation of the Qalipu Mi’kmaw First Nation as a Band under the Indian Act. Following the Band recognition, an additional 70,000 applications for membership were received. As the application process continued, two court cases set precedent for applicants who had been denied membership due to a missing signature or long-form birth certificate. Through an updated enrollment process and changing eligibility requirements, as of September 6, 2018, there are 22,251 members who constitute the membership of the Qalipu Mi’kmaw First Nation (Qalipu, 2018).

With the recognition of Qalipu in 2011, my parents applied, and I received a card with notice that I would be added to the registry for status-Indians. I was raised without knowledge of my Mi’kmaw ancestry. This is significant when considering “home” and my belongingness to certain communities. In some regard, one may assume that this card justifies a belonging to this community and allows me to work with other Ktaqmkuk Mi’kmaw as an “insider.” Instead, I recognized through this research project that my lived experiences are that of a settler Mi’kmaw as an “insider.” Instead, I recognized through this research project that my lived experiences are that of a settler and thus distinctly renders my position as that of a non-Indigenous scholar. Self-reflection was a large part of my research journey as I worked with the community of Ewippek, and my positionality emerged as an important consideration throughout this project.

Marie Battiste (2016), a Mi’kmaw scholar from Unama’ki, writes about coming home after many years of working away. In few words, M. Battiste (2016) described her struggle with defining home and what that meant to her,

Home. Was it the land that was rich with the stories of my father and mother who travelled from one place to another, pointing to one landmark after another telling me about how it came to be a memory and a story to be told and retold until it landed fully in my memory? . . . . Home has come to have many connotations for me and to consist of many stories from many places where I have lived. These stories were lited from Maine to Boston to Nova Scotia to California and back again and then back and forth to Saskatoon. (p. vi)

Reflecting on the words of M. Battiste (2016), I began to contemplate ways in which to define my own belonging. Was I to define home in the community that I was raised, alongside the people who raised me? Does my home extend to the cultural norms I understood as a Newfoundlander, and how exactly did those norms influence my values and beliefs? These questions became more relevant when considering my membership to the Qalipu Mi’kmaw First Nation (Qalipu) and my role as a researcher working with an Indigenous community.

Exploring the meaning of “home” and belonging to groups or communities is significant as it paints a picture of one’s position as a researcher in their own research relationships. For example, Findlay (2016) states that “acting as an ally requires the patient and respectful building of relationships with, and helping to honour the work and example of, indigenous scholars in home, in your home and theirs, and across the world” (p. 75). Findlay’s journey from “smyg settler to ethical ally” as he explains, was not an easy adjustment, and he thanks “patient, generous teachers of all sorts,” most profoundly Indigenous scholars Marie Battiste and Sa’kej Henderson (p. 74). Coming from a strong foundation of Euro-centric education, Findlay describes his relearning through the Mi’kmaw creation story and engages with the teachings therein.

**Research as a Colonial Tool**

There is an oppressive nature associated with much of research that has been conducted on Indigenous communities or groups by settler scholars in Canada (Goodman et al., 2018). Pitseolak Pfeifer, an Inuk scholar from Iqaluit, makes two strong points in her 2018 critique of research conducted on Inuit in the Arctic. I believe these two points are directly related to my work with the community of Ewippek, and they illustrate the history of research as oppression.

First, Pfeifer (2018) asserts that there is a deep suspicion that emerges from Inuit (and other Indigenous communities) about research. Pfeifer maintains that research can be viewed as “rooted in old colonial practices when Inuit and other Indigenous peoples were used for ‘advancing science’ (e.g., nutrition experiments in residential schools)” (para. 14). It is understandable that some Indigenous peoples resent research as a potential tool for development in a community when it has historically been used as a tool to disadvantage, disempower, and harm Indigenous peoples.

Second, Pfeifer (2018) speaks to the progress that has been made in research particularly in the Arctic with Inuit communities. She notes that Inuit voices are being included more frequently through community-based research, but that knowledge shared in Inuit communities remains inaccessible in southern Canadian institutions. Similar to the ideas expressed by Wilson (2001), Pfeifer suggests that a critical reflection on the purpose of their project and whether it is relevant, participatory, and inclusive within the community can help empower Indigenous voices that are otherwise lost. Ensuring that research involving Indigenous peoples is accessible, understandable, and relevant is integral to creating an anti-oppressive space when conducting research (Pfeifer, 2018).

An increasing number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars have been writing about research involving Indigenous peoples and the importance of “decolonizing” research in an anti-oppressive manner (M. Battiste, 1998; Iwama et al., 2009; L. T. R. Smith, 1999). Even though oppressive research approaches have been discussed for decades by various scholars, Pfeifer (2018) highlights the need for research historically as a tool that perpetuated the oppression of Indigenous communities. In response, the general narrative that is woven throughout contemporary Indigenous scholarship
looks at how to reshape and rethink research so that a positive relationship between academia and Indigenous communities can be forged (L. T. T. R. Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Building on the previous work of these scholars, this project hinges on the notion of the academy working with Indigenous communities to empower self-reliance to create positive change and development.

**Research Through an Indigenous Research Paradigm**

As my interests focus on the ability or inability of traditional knowledge to be used as a vehicle for change within Indigenous communities in Ktaqmnuk, I began by learning from the writings of Indigenous scholars who have discussed the concept of an Indigenous research paradigm (Absolon, 2011; Alfred, 2009; Henderson, 2000; G. Smith, 2000; L. T. T. R. Smith, 2000; Wilson, 2008).

Absolon (2011) paints a distinct picture of an Indigenous research paradigm through self-reflection. She identifies herself in *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know* as a blend of both Anishinaabe and English nations, belonging to the Flying Post First Nation. Absolon (2011) positions the term “research” as a colonial tool used to further oppress Indigenous peoples. Therefore, to avoid the use of the term “research,” Absolon (2011) uses the hyphenated term “re-search,” redefining the concept of searching, to look again at what is known from the position of an Indigenous person, employing IK, realities, and methodologies. As will be presented in the following section about Two-Eyed Seeing, this definition of “re-search,” centered on Indigenous traditional knowledge and perspectives, acts as one of the “eyes” through which Two-Eyed Seeing frames a research project. Furthermore, Absolon (2011) supports Wilson’s (2001) emphasis of relationality in asserting that “Indigenous methodologies are holistic, relational, interrelation and interdependent with Indigenous philosophies, beliefs and ways of life” (p. 22). Absolon (2011) underlines the need to remove the colonial assumptions behind research and validate an Indigenous research paradigm outside of any Western norms.

Black and McBean (2016) discuss the differences between what is “scientifically-based Western knowledge” and “experiential, spiritually-based traditional knowledge” (p. 6) in the following excerpt:

A key distinction between the two kinds of knowledge is that Western knowledge is derived through hypotheses, acquired through experimentation, and transmitted through written records, whereas traditional knowledge is derived from examples and anecdotes, acquired through daily interactions with people and the planet, and transmitted through oral narratives. (p. 6)

Recognizing the processes that are fundamental to each knowledge system, Black and McBean (2016) posit that tensions exist when scientists, policy makers, engineers, and researchers attempt to “move forward with incorporating [Indigenous] TK into environmental management while respecting the rightful knowledge holders” (p. 7). Through this approach, IK is often seen as less valid to other types of knowledge, or IK can be taken out of context and used to “justify their [environmental decision-makers] own particular and political ends” (Black & McBean, 2016, p. 7).

Alfred (2009) is a Kahnawake Mohawk educator, author, and activist who highlights the limitations of an Indigenous perspective that exists within a Western context that has historically oppressed and disenfranchised Indigenous peoples. For example, Alfred (2009) takes the notion of sovereignty and explains its futility within a Western context: “sovereignty as it is currently understood and applied in indigenous-state relations cannot be seen as an appropriate goal or framework, because it has no relevance to indigenous values” (p. 78). He asserts that since many of the current strategies for sovereignty within Indigenous communities exist within a Western framework, no meaningful progress can be made.

Illustrating the points made by Alfred (2009) within a research context, Wilson (2001) presents four dominant or Western paradigms in research (namely positivism, postpositivism, critical theory, and constructivist theory) and underlines how an Indigenous perspective can shape these dominant paradigms. As one example, critical theory argues that while there may be only one “reality,” this reality is fluid and can change depending on the context one investigates (Wilson, 2001). Wilson (2001) goes on to posit, “we might be able to say in critical theory that our fluid reality is affected by our culture as Indigenous people . . . that would create an Indigenous perspective” (p. 176). Interpreting an Indigenous perspective through critical theory is possible and can produce certain knowledge on the realities of Indigenous peoples. However, like Alfred (2009) and Absolon (2011), Wilson (2001) demands that researchers “go beyond this Indigenous perspective to a full Indigenous paradigm” (p. 176). Instead of continuing to exist within the boundaries of what are the dominant paradigms in research, it is necessary for research within Indigenous communities to be conducted from an entirely separate, but valid, paradigm that reflects Indigenous contexts and worldviews (Wilson, 2001). To minimize these tensions that exist between Western knowledge and Indigenous traditional knowledge and to validate the latter, Ellis (2005) explores the ways in which a bottom-up approach to research and decision making can empower Indigenous communities and build capacity in the development of IK. Instead of assuming a top-down approach, whereby higher level governments seek to incorporate IK into already existing Western policies and frameworks, Ellis (2005) argues that a community-level “participatory” approach positions the research within the relevant community and must build from that point. Yet an Indigenous research paradigm is seeded in Indigenous epistemology and ontology and, thus, cannot be considered simply a form of community-based or participatory research. Instead, the design of the research must be constructed locally through meaningful engagement with the Indigenous community, and the foundation of the Indigenous research methodology employed must belong to
Native peoples (Wilson, 2008). Ownership over research gives agency to a community that has historically had its agency extinguished and ensures it is unique to the relevant community’s culture, history, and territory (Findlay, 2016; Wilson, 2008).

Wilson (2008) also highlights that the understanding of an Indigenous research paradigm is “important for non-Indigenous people, as it will assist in the understanding of Indigenous issues, cultures and values” (p. 19). Using a comparison from New Zealand, Kaupapa Maori research is research conducted with Maori (an Indigenous peoples of New Zealand) by Maori. L. T. R. Smith (2000) poses the question if, and how, Pakeha (Maori word referring to non-Maori peoples, used instead of White or non-Indigenous) can be involved in Kaupapa Maori research. G. Smith (2000) presents a binary between Maori and Pakeha. In this binary, the Maori are generally seen as valuing collective responsibility and cooperation (ours) versus Pakeha who generally value individual freedom and competition (mine). G. Smith (2000) posits that both Maori and Pakeha exist somewhere along the spectrum of that binary but in general are divided as such in values. These guiding values are applicable elsewhere, including among the Mi’kmaw in Mi’kmaw’ki (J. Battiste, 2010).

L. T. R. Smith (2000) also describes the concept of whanau (translated to extended family) as a principle within Kaupapa Maori research. Whanau represents a support system within Kaupapa Maori research, and L. T. R. Smith (2000) posits that Pakeha, or non-Indigenous people, may belong in Kaupapa Maori research as part of this support system stating that “Pakeha who have a genuine desire to support the cause of Maori ought to be included because they can be useful allies and colleagues in research” (p. 227).

As I have sought to understand an Indigenous research paradigm, it is important to reflect on my own positionality that resonates especially with the concept of whanau as “extended family” since I share ancestral ties with many of the families in western Ktaqmkuk and even in the community of Ewipkek. I liken this to my own situation wherein I identify as a non-Indigenous researcher who is conducting research with an Indigenous community through what can only be the interpretation of an Indigenous research paradigm from a collaborative approach. The collaboration with Elder White did not facilitate the imposition of my knowledge onto the community but instead designed a research project that hoped to empower and build upon the community’s perspective. My personal history in the region in which this research takes place drives the motivation I have for working with the community of Ewipkek but does not alter my role in this research project as anything other than “extended family” as an eager ally and colleague.

As a non-Indigenous researcher in an Indigenous community, my input is effective insofar as my academic position can leverage certain supports for the community to build its existing capacity for knowledge gathering. For this project, the support that I provided was largely financial and human resources. This included supporting the community to collect, analyze, and disseminate their knowledge as well as commissioning assistance with land use and occupancy maps. Furthermore, I have played a role in sharing the knowledge of community members, with consent, to wider audiences to influence a shift in the consideration of traditional knowledge in decision making.

As an outsider to the community and culture, it has been my responsibility as a non-Indigenous researcher to respect the community of Ewipkek’s ownership over their own knowledge. Moreover, when conducting research with this community, I sought to ensure that the production of any knowledge is “researched and presented from an Indigenous paradigm” to the fullest extent possible as a non-Indigenous researcher (Wilson, 2008, p. 19). To validate and build upon an Indigenous research paradigm, the framework of Two-Eyed Seeing was employed throughout this study (Iwama et al., 2009). Akin to the inclusion of Pakeha in Kaupapa Maori research through the concept of whanau, Two-Eyed Seeing brings non-Indigenous peoples into research with Mi’kmaw communities through an unobtrusive, collaborative approach.

Two-Eyed Seeing

Albert Marshall, an esteemed Mi’kmaw Elder in Nova Scotia, coined the term Two-Eyed Seeing which describes the idea that two separate ways of knowing exist in research when a non-Indigenous researcher works within Indigenous communities (Bartlett et al., 2012). Bartlett et al. (2012) explore the benefits of fostering an equal balance between both Western and Indigenous systems of knowledge in the pursuit of discovery through research. The authors, including Mi’kmaw Elders Murdena Marshall (clan mother of the Muin [Bear] Clan), Albert Marshall (from the Moose Clan), and non-Indigenous collaborator and biologist Cheryl Bartlett (2012), posit that the validation of IK provides a space for significant discovery alongside decolonization.

The concept of Two-Eyed Seeing in research is interesting to consider as part of an Indigenous research paradigm. Iwama et al. (2009) discuss the use of Two-Eyed Seeing in research as it “draws together the strengths of mainstream, or Western, and Mi’kmaw knowledges” (p. 4). As an example, in 2011, a roundtable was held in Ottawa that highlighted successful knowledge translation approaches in First Nation, Métis, and Inuit populations across Canada in order to create a different narrative about research with Indigenous peoples (Institute of Aboriginal Peoples’ Health, 2011). The summary report of the roundtable states that “a key barrier affecting approaches to improved knowledge translation activities . . . is the lack of a systematic understanding of, and approach to, integrating traditional knowledge and community approaches to healing with Western scientific approaches” (p. 2). As other scholars have asserted so far in this article, this barrier may be attributed to not grounding the IK in an Indigenous research paradigm, one that respects and validates Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies. The summary report indicates that the Two-Eyed Seeing model is one way of addressing these tensions in research (Institute of Aboriginal Peoples’ Health, 2011).
Cindy Peltier (2018) is an Anishinaabe woman who has discussed the application of Two-Eyed Seeing through participatory action research and community collaboration. Figure 2, taken from Peltier (2018), shows the ways in which Two-Eyed Seeing can be used as a framework for research in Indigenous communities. The diagram in Figure 2 demonstrates the research processes that exist within a Western paradigm: research planning, research implementation, production of knowledge, and action, and how these processes can shift toward an Indigenous paradigm consisting of community engagement, capacity building, empowerment, and self-determination. Peltier (2018) argues that through Two-Eyed Seeing and meaningful collaboration with an Indigenous community, it is possible to shift research to validate an Indigenous paradigm and assume the four processes outside the circle (Figure 2).

Furthermore, Iwama et al. (2009) present an interesting case in their article “Two-Eyed Seeing and the Language of Healing in Community-Based Research,” whereby an almost equal mixture of dominant Western ideas of academic research was combined with traditional Indigenous forms of written research. The purpose of this choice for the paper was to demonstrate how different styles can relay the same ideas in written form. The first half of their paper resembled a typical, Western report-style document, while the second half of their paper was a written dialogue of conversation between the researchers. Despite the different ways in which the concepts were presented in each half of the paper, both forms of knowledge dissemination effectively communicated the ideas and arguments from their research (Iwama et al., 2009). However, the authors caution that some meaning may be further lost or misinterpreted through the translation of the Mi’kmaq language to English.

Building on the principles in Figure 2 (relevance, reciprocity, respect, and responsibility), and the example presented by Iwama et al. (2009), the following section will outline my research with the community of Ewipkek and the ways in which our collaboration has illustrated the four key elements of Two-Eyed Seeing. As my education and lived experiences match that of a Western paradigm, my approach to research that I have conducted in the past assumes the four processes inside the circle (Figure 2), one “eye” of Two-Eyed Seeing. The second “eye” when considering research, as explained by Absolon (2011), is the emphasis on “looking again” or “researching” through the traditional knowledge within Indigenous communities. Two-Eyed Seeing embraces research “in a way that privileges Indigenous voices and Indigenous ways of knowing” through collaboration and is therefore one possible way to employ an Indigenous research paradigm as outlined above (Peltier, 2018, p. 3).

**Cocreating Research and Working With the Community of Ewipkek**

The approaches, principles, and experiences that have been discussed throughout this article thus far have informed my research with the community of Ewipkek. From the beginning of this research, I sought to maintain a collaborative approach...
to the project. This collaboration then evolved throughout the life of the project as I read literature produced by Indigenous scholars who discuss the implications of research in Indigenous communities. This project has been developed through an Indigenous research paradigm using the Two-Eyed Seeing approach specific to the community of Ewipkek to the greatest extent possible, given time constraints and level of experience. Several aspects of our research together are unique to the community of Ewipkek and validate the Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies of the community. This section describes my interpretation of Two-Eyed Seeing and how its key processes, as presented by Peltier (2018; Figure 2), were put into practice while working with the community of Ewipkek.

First, before any knowledge sharing began, it was important to codesign the project at its earliest stage, an aspect of community engagement. I approached the community of Ewipkek and engaged in conversations about research and the current work that was being done in the community. Elder White spoke about the Traditional Land Use and Occupancy Study (TLUOS) document that had begun a few years ago and described the work that was left to do. The document was unfinished in its current form and required some copyediting, reformatting, and additions to become finalized. Additionally, I added some thoughts about my own experience in policy research and this dialogue was the precursor to the formal establishment of the objectives and goals of our project together. A research agreement was devised between me, as the researcher, and the community of Ewipkek, as a partner, and signed by Elder White, Chief (at the time) Liz LaSaga, and myself. The agreement, an aspect of our negotiated partnership and community engagement, denoted the ways in which the research would unfold along with the potential mutual benefits from the project. In brief, the research design of our project ensured full transparency through a constant open dialogue between researcher (myself) and community partner (Elder White and the No’kmaq Village Band). Documents were sent back-and-forth throughout the research process to be reviewed to increase accountability for the work produced by the researcher. A dialogue must exist at every intersection of the research process: between the researcher and the community partner, between the researcher and the participants, between the researcher and themselves, and between the researcher and the reader. The community defined its research needs through a negotiated partnership that facilitated a high standard of accountability between the researcher and the community to uphold the conditions in the research agreement.

Focusing now on capacity building, it was important to ensure that our project not only benefited the community in the present, but that the outputs of the research would be useful in the future for other endeavors. Based on the research agreement and needs identified by the community, the data that were collected for the TLUOS was compiled into a database and given to the community in a format that does not limit additions or changes being made. In order to facilitate capacity building that lasts beyond the life of the current project, it was acknowledged that the community must retain ownership over the material produced from this collaboration. Therefore, all the outputs of this project, such as the TLUOS maps, for example, will be kept within the community in both a raw form (in a format that can be manipulated in the future) and a final product (a report alongside a series of maps). The community was able to gather stories and then retain specific tools and resources to use in the future when needed.

To promote empowerment, our project needed not only to produce knowledge but also to help facilitate future research and/or development possibilities within the community. With Elder White as an integral partner in this project, the results of this study will be disseminated to the participants as well as the community at large. As discussed above with the Indigenization of Grenfell Campus, this partnership with the community is not exclusive in the precedent set for other researchers wishing to work with Mi’kmaw communities in Ktaqmkuk. One of the hopes of this project is to present a nonoppressive approach to research with Indigenous communities and empower both researchers and communities. This empowerment must reach Mi’kmaw communities in western Ktaqmkuk to collaborate on projects to enact some form of socioeconomic development as it fits within the scope of the project.

Finally, self-determination is one process that is very relevant for the community of Ewipkek as its ability to self-govern has been challenged throughout the past and present. To ensure that this project has allowed for self-determination throughout the research process, everything that is produced as a result of this collaboration is owned by the community. All maps, documents, and other products of this project are owned by the community of Ewipkek, and I hold no rights to distribute or otherwise use any material that is produced without consent. Having ownership of the project also means that the community can terminate the project and research relationship at any time with no repercussions or risk if the relationship is not meeting the community’s satisfaction. In other words, it has not been up to me as the researcher to decide whether the project is meeting the conditions set out in the research agreement. Instead, it is my responsibility to uphold my end of the deal and regularly check in with community partners to ensure that the project is proceeding as planned and to change the approach or method when advised by the community. Ownership of the project, at this point, equates to knowledge gathered from the community for the community that can be used to support and further develop community initiatives.

**Responsibilities and Lessons Learned**

This section is presented to fellow researchers in Ktaqmkuk currently or anticipating collaborating with an Indigenous group or community in research. The generalizability of the information presented here is limited as the concepts that emerged throughout this project are situated in both space and time (Absolon, 2011). Therefore, in its most honest interpretation, the responsibilities listed here apply to researchers working with the community of Ewipkek in western Ktaqmkuk in the current context. For researchers working with Indigenous
groups or communities outside of Ewipkek or especially Ktaqmkuk, a similar thorough self-reflection and learning journey is necessary to assess the appropriateness of research as a tool for development in that community at that time.

Throughout this journey, several responsibilities have emerged for researchers that are important to meet in order to ensure research is conducted with respect in an anti-oppressive manner. First, it is important to involve the community as early as possible. All efforts must be made to meet, build relationships, and gain a mutual understanding with research partners in the community before any research question or design is formulated.

Second, the formulation of the research question and design must be collaborative in nature and reflect the priorities of the community. All efforts must be made to employ an Indigenous research paradigm, framework, approach, and methodology that acknowledges, validates, and empowers the knowledge gathered from the community. Once a research question and design have been created, a research agreement must be devised and signed by both the researcher and the community partners outlining their respective commitments and duties throughout the project. This research agreement should encompass the full scope of the project and be revisited should any aspect of the project change or priorities shift. Every effort should be made to have a community partner (or community coinvestigator) present during knowledge collection not only to benefit from greater knowledge sharing but also to promote mutual respect and trust between the knowledge holders and the research process.

Third, knowledge holders must also be given the opportunity to review the knowledge that was collected after it has been transcribed or otherwise processed. Both raw and processed knowledge (recorded interviews, maps created, transcribed audio, etc.) must be returned to the community to be the sole owners. The researcher must ask the community partner before using the knowledge in future projects/presentations/papers. Therefore, the community partners must verify all of the dissemination of knowledge before being released to the public or private sector as necessary. The researcher must be prepared to change/revise/redo or destroy any or all part(s) of their project should the priorities of the community change or the situation no longer become desirable for the community. At any time, the researcher must understand that if their research is no longer of interest to the community, it is no longer appropriate to continue with the project. This involves significant risk in terms of completion for typical research time lines, for example, a graduate student finishing their program, however, the risk that the community assumes in this partnership is greater and thus takes priority. A community such as Ewipkek that has endured a history of marginalization and “othering” takes huge risk in sharing their stories broadly with a society founded on colonial attitudes that facilitated their marginalization.

Fourth, in order to ensure the applicability of Two-Eyed Seeing and validate both an Indigenous and Western research paradigm, an effort must be made to validate both approaches in the project equally. This balance of the “two eyes,” an Indigenous and Western research paradigm, exists at every stage of the research project including the initial formation of the design and approach. For example, when stories are presented from the community that emerges from an Indigenous perspective, the researcher can reference scholarly literature relevant to the study that provides a more Western perspective on the topic at hand. Furthermore, a relatively balanced inclusion of both an Indigenous and Western research paradigm may be sought through Two-Eyed Seeing. However, an open dialogue and collaboration with the community will better define whether weight should be given to one paradigm over the other, depending on what is more appropriate for the project at hand. This balance between Indigenous and Western approaches to dissemination should be considered as well. For example, my project emerged within an academic thesis but also has been presented orally by both Elder White and I (at separate occasions) at conferences and other events.

Fifth, a case study can be used, when appropriate for the community, to give a real-life example that supports the stories gathered. It is important to include the community partners in the analysis of the case study as well as the interpretation of the stories from knowledge holders. There may be an interview, or series of interviews, that does not allow for a community partner to be present to ask relevant questions themselves. To ensure that the voice of the community is not lost, the researcher must give members of the community the opportunity to provide questions that the researchers then takes to the interview on behalf of that person. The transcript of this interview should then be returned as soon as possible to the individual who posed the question.

Finally, as Black and McBean (2016) assert, it is important that researchers “check” their interpretation of stories that have been shared from community members as traditional knowledge can be taken out of context to justify the needs of environmental decision makers without meaningful consultation in the community. The stories shared by community members in this study surrounding traditional land use and occupancy demonstrate the value of traditional knowledge as a resource in development decision-making processes.

Conclusion

This article has presented current approaches, principles, and considerations for researchers working with Indigenous communities, drawing from both academic literature and from the collaborative experience working with the community of Ewipkek. As more and more Indigenous scholars assert their voices in academia, and historically oppressive institutions such as universities attempt to unlearn colonial research practices, it is important that these major concepts, principles, and experiences are considered. In summary, this article has described the different characteristics of a Western research paradigm versus an Indigenous research paradigm that can support the application of the Two-Eyed Seeing framework outlined by Peltier (2018) within the community of Ewipkek.
L. T. R. Smith (1999) argues that research is one of the “dirtiest” words among Indigenous communities often provoking feelings of mistrust and hesitation. As one of the most researched peoples in the world (Fredericks, 2008), Indigenous peoples have dealt with researchers entering the community with Western research practices that alienate participants at every stage of the project. To combat this disenfranchising experience, Indigenous scholars are calling for researchers (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) to employ research frameworks that empower communities and participants (Wilson, 2008). At its foundation, a framework that is appropriate when working with Indigenous communities cannot be based in a Western research paradigm because it is this paradigm that has perpetuated the use of research as a colonial tool (Absolon, 2011; Alfred, 2009). Instead, centering an Indigenous research paradigm when developing a framework for research will validate the knowledge produced (Wilson, 2001), and Two-Eyed Seeing can facilitate this process.

As a non-Indigenous scholar with Mi’kmaw ancestry, I have ties to the community of Ewipkek. However, this does not absolve the need for me to critically reflect on my own principles and experiences that influence the way in which I approach research. As a collaborative project, the Mi’kmaw framework Two-Eyed Seeing was used to validate both my Western paradigm and Elder White’s Indigenous paradigm to create a project that was specific and appropriate in design to the community of Ewipkek. It is worth noting that, even in its conclusion, this article can only provide one interpretation of these concepts as they are relevant to the community I have been working with, as well as the present time in which they are interpreted. The context of Mi’kmaw communities in western Ktaqmkuk is relevant in the interpretation because it changes the ways in which these concepts are applied. For example, the formation of Qalipu is so recent and is still undergoing modifications that in the future, should a researcher be working with another Mi’kmaw community that is a ward of Qalipu, that researcher is responsible for reflecting on their role in the project and its implications for the community at that moment in time. The process of self-reflection should be emphasized when working with an Indigenous community through constant “checks” that happen within dialogue at every intersection to ensure accountability throughout the research process (Absolon, 2011).

The aim of this article was to demonstrate the use of Two-Eyed Seeing as a framework for reflection and collaboration that can allow researchers (Indigenous or non-Indigenous) to conduct research in a nonoppressive manner with an Indigenous community. Indigenous scholars are gaining momentum in academic spaces, and the common practice of academics conducting research on Indigenous communities has now shifted. Instead, researchers are tasked to work with Indigenous communities in a way that centers an Indigenous research paradigm. It is critical in these processes that researchers recognize their responsibility to ensure that any projects are not undertaken without proper consideration. Highlighted in the quote at the beginning of this article, Wilson (2008) asserts that Indigenous communities “demand that research conducted in our communities follows our codes of conduct and honours our systems of knowledge and worldviews” (p. 8). The onus lies with the researcher to meet this demand.

Author’s Note
For more details and understanding of the Mi’kmaw terminology used throughout this article, please see Online Appendix A.

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Notes
1. “Calm waters” is the place name used to refer to Flat Bay and will be used throughout this article to encourage and respect the Mi’kmaw place name for the community.
2. “The far shore where the waves cross-over” is the place name for the island of Newfoundland and will be used throughout this article to encourage and respect the Mi’kmaw place name for the island portion of the province of Newfoundland and Labrador (Wetzel, 1995).
3. Findlay (2016) describes his experience as a European scholar educated in the UK traveling to Canada as bringing knowledge to a “young country,” with the belief that “[I [Findlay]] would not have to adjust to my new job in a new city in a former British colony. My students, colleagues and (mostly white) neighbors would have to adjust to me” (p. 73).
4. Although now looked upon as a term with negative, colonial connotations, the term Indian is still used within the Indian Act to refer to a person who has been registered under the Indian Act or has the potential to be registered under the Indian Act (1985).
5. Since its formation, Qalipu has gone through multiple reexaminations of their enrollment process and membership list with “criteria” that must be met (for more information, see https://www.cbc.ca/news/indigenous/qalipu-mikmaq-membership-reassessment-1.4908955).
6. Orthography from Wetzel (1995).
7. Although the anonymity of other participants in my research project be kept, as the coinvestigator and main collaborator, Elder White has given permission to be identified throughout this article.
8. Status-Indian refers to a person who is recognized as First Nation, Métis, or Inuit under the Indian Act (1985).

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