A Collaborative Multi-Method Approach to Evaluating Indigenous Land-Based Learning With Men

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Abstract
In Canada, a vast majority of urban Indigenous people face distinct challenges accessing and connecting to Indigenous cultural practices. Research has found that colonial policies and practices continue to disrupt and fracture traditional methods of passing down cultural teachings, including dispossession from traditional lands in which cultural practices are rooted. This disruption continues to affect the availability of educational programming by and with Indigenous people and in Indigenous languages. This research involves a multi-method approach to observe and engage with a land-based traditional drum-making program for Indigenous men in an urban center in Southwestern Manitoba. By participating, watching, and listening to the men within the workshops through unstructured observation, Sharing Circles, individual interviews, and photovoice, we aim to understand the impacts of land-based learning on Indigenous men’s well-being. The study is designed in accordance with University and Tri-Agency ethical guidelines, integrating ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP), as well as the principles of respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility within all phases of the research. The research is co-created by the university researchers, community collaborators, and other relevant stakeholders.

Keywords
collaborative ethnography, two-eyed seeing, land-based learning, multi-method, photovoice, indigenous men, background

Background
Many Indigenous people lack opportunities to connect with cultural practices and a shared sense of community identity because of ongoing colonial practices in Canada (Alfred & Comtassell, 2005; Nelson & Wilson, 2017). Indigenous men face distinct challenges including high rates of incarceration (Dennison et al., 2014; Singh et al., 2019), high rates of death by suicide (Pollock et al., 2018), and intergenerational trauma (Innes & Anderson, 2015; Prehn & Ezzy, 2020). The systemic challenges that Indigenous men face perpetuate negative stereotypes about Indigenous men and their ability to fulfill social and cultural obligations as fathers and role models. At times, Western research reinforces negative and deficit-focused framings of Indigenous men and boys by focusing on the ‘problems’ they and their communities face.

In response to these problems, Indigenous leaders and scholars frame culture as a solution (Ball, 2010; Prehn et al., 2021; VACFSS, 2020). Indigenous people have often sought...
cultural teachings to first find, and then understand, their identities as a people (Isaak et al., 2015). Ceremonies, according to giskednamoogk and Hancock (1993), provide “a way of communicating” and “a way of living” (p. 17). A growing body of research shows the importance of cultural connection, teaching, and ceremony particularly in relation to Indigenous health and well-being. Sacred teachings, ceremonies, and cultural values have been linked to healing, resilience, and positive mental health outcomes (Kirmayer et al., 2011; Snowshoe et al., 2017; Tuck & Anderson, 2014). Other studies have found that cultural programming can enable Indigenous men to learn in community with other Indigenous men and share thoughts and emotions safely (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2021; Rossiter et al., 2017). These programs, however, are not without challenges. For example, staffing issues, including lack of Indigenous staff and lack of Indigenous language use in programming are common (Murrup-Stewart et al., 2020). Furthermore, research about such programming has seldom followed up with participants to understand its impact on their experiences over time (Rossiter et al., 2017). Sustainability, capacity, and control are core issues.

Land-Based Learning

Land, water, nature, and environment are all fundamental determinants of health for Indigenous peoples (King et al., 2009); therefore, Indigenous ways of knowing, cultural practices, wellness, and healing are strongly connected with land (Richmond & Ross, 2009; Tobias & Richmond, 2014). Land-based learning, or land-based teachings, provides support for Indigenous peoples in a holistic manner, touching on elements of their physical, mental, and social health (Redvers, 2020). For many Indigenous individuals, connection to land and ancestral homelands may be disrupted due to forced migration, colonization, and the dispossess of lands from historical and contemporary pressures (King et al., 2009). Hatala et al. (2019) highlights the complexities of delivering land-based programs to urban Indigenous youth in rural areas, such as transportation, lack of access to elders, and a lack of ties to reserves or territories. Although their findings were in relation to urban Indigenous youth, it may be argued that many of the same barriers would apply to urban Indigenous men.

This project seeks to dismantle some of the barriers identified by providing and evaluating land-based culturally connected drum-making workshops for urban Indigenous men. The evaluation of the program is conducted using a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) framework with a two-eyed seeing approach. The overarching goal is to develop and evaluate land-based learning workshops for and with Indigenous men to improve cultural connection, while also providing evidence that will inform organizational and policy decisions. Building on an existing partnership with Indigenous men, the specific research objectives are to:

1. Observe Indigenous men’s experiences engaging in culturally connected, land-based Indigenous drum-making workshops over time;
2. Assess the effectiveness of workshops in connecting Indigenous men to culture and Indigenous teachings;
3. Identify experiential, programmatic, and contextual challenges that influence the success of the workshops in connecting men with Indigenous culture; and,
4. Build leadership and community capacity through mentorship and knowledge mobilization grounded in culture.

Method

Research Design

This CBPR study, funded through a Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada Partnership Engaged Grant, involves a multi-method approach to understand how Indigenous men engage in cultural activities through land-based learning. This article provides detail on how two-eyed seeing will be integrated into each step of the research process, including the planning, and the future implementation and knowledge translation initiatives.

Decolonizing Approaches to Research: A Two-Eyed Seeing Approach/Community-Based Research

Two-eyed seeing is an approach to guide the inclusion of Indigenous voices and ways of knowing (Peltier, 2018). The concept of two-eyed seeing is “to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing, and to see from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing, and to use both of these eyes together” (Bartlett et al., 2012; p. 335). The concept allows the integration of Indigenous knowledges, Indigenous worldviews, and Western perspectives equally (Iwama et al., 2009). Employing the two-eyed seeing approach will allow the researchers to evaluate cultural programming for Indigenous men, with Indigenous knowledge equally represented alongside Western forms of knowledge.

The partnership within this study is an ongoing relationship developed between academic and community researchers. The relationship is reciprocal, with all team members contributing to and gaining from the projects. The team has experience collaborating on research, utilizing CBPR (Waddell et al., 2020; 2021). All decisions about research, consent, analysis, and dissemination have and will be constructed together, as a team of collaborators with respect, reciprocity, and accountability (Brunger & Wall, 2016; Castleden et al., 2012; Waddell et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2019). The research and data collection team includes two community members, Jason Gobeil, an Indigenous community leader, and Frank Tacan, an Indigenous Spiritual Leader, who both have multiple roles and responsibilities that include men’s healing programs as well as other community initiatives. Also included on the research and data collection team
Table 1. Schedule of Workshops.

| Workshop Session | What is Planned |
|------------------|-----------------|
| Introduction and overview | Explanation of the research process and informed consent |
| Traditional hunting, dressing the animal and teachings; Sweat Lodge | • Workshop participants, Knowledge Keepers, and research partners will spend a weekend on the land learning about a traditional hunt |
| Preparing the hide and teachings; creating the drum | • Sharing Circles will occur as indicated by community research partners |
| Awakening the drum, and teachings | • Workshop participants, Knowledge Keepers, and research partners will learn how to prepare the hide from the animal and begin to create the drums |
| | • Sharing Circles will occur, when deemed appropriate by the community research partners |
| Thank-you feast | • Workshop participants, Knowledge Keepers, and research partners: we learn the process of awakening the drums and share the teachings |
| | • Sharing Circles will occur, when deemed appropriate by the community research partners |

is an Indigenous scholar and activist, Marti Ford, who came to the team because of a community partnership with Jason Gobeil and the Ohitika/Ogichidaa (Warrior) Men’s Group. The Movember-funded Ohitika/Ogichidaa (Warrior) Group is a Dakota Ojibway Child and Family Services (DOCFS) land-based program that works with fathers and men that play a fatherhood role, to increase their holistic knowledge of their roles and offer support for these men within their roles (Jason Gobeil, Personal Communication, December 12, 2020). The research team consists of three Western scholars, Candice Waddell-Henowitch, Rachel V. Herron, and Jonathan A. Allan, who come from settler backgrounds, but are committed to reconciliation through anti-racist, decolonizing, and feminist methodologies that center Indigenous voices and knowledge. Lastly, two research assistants, one Indigenous, Stephanie Spence, and one settler, Madeleine L. Kruth, round out the team and provide support to the research, data collection, and community initiatives.

Recruitment

Recruitment for this research project will be led through the community research partners, Gobeil and Tacan, who, as mentioned, are immersed in land-based programing for Indigenous men throughout the community. Men that are involved in those community-based initiatives will be offered an opportunity to participate in the research and evaluation of one specific program: traditional drum making. We anticipate that the collaborators in this research program will include eight to 10 men that are already involved in the men’s programs who are also interested in contributing to the evaluation and research of the program. Explanation of the research project and a description of the process of consent will occur in the first meeting between the research team and the workshop participants. Ongoing consent will occur throughout the workshops. We are focusing on a small group of men within the project to allow for effective observation and relationship building between the research team and the workshop participants.

Watching, Listening, Learning, and Collecting Stories

Collaborative Ethnography

Collaboration is central to using the method of ethnography for research (Lassiter, 2005). Collaborative ethnography as a method of research resituates collaborative practice and allows for reflection at every stage of the ethnographic process (Wilson, 2008). Research partners will use collaborative ethnography to guide the dual process of unstructured observation and informal Sharing Circles1 in all the workshops. The workshops themselves, as outlined in Table 1, will occur in an organic manner based on the knowledge and expertise of the community research partners and Indigenous Knowledge Keepers. Collaborative ethnography will be an avenue to document observation, make commentary, and engage in reciprocal learning throughout the research process (Kennemore & Postero, 2020; Lassiter, 2000; Rappaport, 2017). Different research team members have different roles within this ethnographic process. Gobeil is the Indigenous leader and workshop facilitator, and Tacan is the Indigenous Spiritual Leader. Within collaborative ethnography, identified consultants, in this case our Indigenous partners and workshop facilitators, collaborate on how the data is evolving throughout the process (Lassiter, 2000).

The other research partners and research assistants will attend the workshops as observers and in some situations when directed by the Indigenous leaders as participants. These research partners will take notes of their observations, as according to Wilson (2008), documenting observations and notetaking are one of the few appropriate and important ways to participate in ceremony within Indigenous research methodologies. Researchers will be observing interactions between participants; participants’ reactions to the teachings,
the environment, and any of their own personal feelings or reactions to the workshops. Additionally, a crucial part of this collaborative ethnographic method is relationship, reciprocity, and respect. The research methodology honors the relationships that are being developed within the workshops, as well as the relationship with knowledge creation between all parties. All participants in the workshops, whether Indigenous leaders, Western researchers, or participants, are equal and connected to one another through the knowledge creation process (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008).

To incorporate the two-eyed seeing approach more intentionally into the work, the researchers prepared themselves to participate by attending Indigenous teachings and ceremony prior to the workshops commencing. All the researchers conducting observation during the workshops are women, so the teachings were conducted by Indigenous Knowledge Keepers who were also women. The teachings centered on important considerations to conduct the research respectfully in accordance with traditional teachings.

**Sharing Circles**

Sharing Circles are a method of data collection used previously within this research partnership (Waddell et al., 2020; 2021). Sharing Circles facilitate storytelling, traditional teaching, and self-reflection while centering Indigenous voices and epistemologies (Datta, 2018; Lavallée, 2009). Gobeil and Tacan will hold Sharing Circles throughout the workshops with the Indigenous men when deemed appropriate, using guiding questions developed collaboratively (Table 2). The Sharing Circles will be audio-recorded and transcribed by research partners. Many of these circles will occur without the Western research partners because consistent with cultural practices, in some situations, it is important for the Western partners to sit outside the circle rather than take space within the circle (Waddell et al., 2020). Researchers will only participate in the Sharing Circles when invited by the Indigenous leaders and workshop facilitators.

To ensure that all perspectives and worldviews of collaborators are equally, precisely accounted for and addressed, informal Sharing Circles with all the research partners will be used strategically throughout the process. These informal Sharing Circles allow the research partners to engage in conversation regarding the ethnographic observations, challenges, reactions, and the personal thoughts of the researchers (Mulhall, 2003).

Utilizing informal Sharing Circles has been employed previously by this research team as part of the reflexive process (Waddell et al., 2020; 2021). Sharing Circles are a form of collaborative engagement that ensures the relationship between collaborators is respected, and the interpretation of events happens continuously, allowing for collaboration and reflection at all stages of research (Rappaport, 2017; Wilson, 2008). These informal Sharing Circles will also be audio-recorded and transcribed by the research partners.

**Photovoice**

Photovoice was first introduced as a method of CBPR (Community-Based Participatory Research) by Caroline Wang and as a form of PEP (Participant-Employed Photography) (Castleden et al., 2008). Photovoice is a method of CPBR that involves recording and reflecting on select community issues, encouraging group dialogue around these issues that have potential to influence policymakers and individuals to move towards social change (Castleden et al., 2008). Photovoice has previously been referred to as auto-driving (Heisley & Levy, 1991), reflexive photography, and photo novella (Wang & Burris, 1997; Wang et al., 1998). Wang et al. (1998) described this method of CBPR as a way “by which people create and discuss photographs as a means of catalyzing personal and community change.” As photovoice allows an individual to reflect on multiple experiences, participants will be taking photographs, sharing their reflections with peers, making collective interpretation of the imagery, and sharing those images in dissemination strategies (Castleden et al., 2008; Liebenberg, 2018). This method of CBPR has been previously utilized by other researchers working with Indigenous communities as a way of fostering a sense of ownership in the research process and ensuring that research is culturally appropriate (Castleden et al., 2008). The process of collective interpretation critical to the photovoice method will occur during the final Sharing Circle and feast. Consistent with Indigenous methods, the opportunity to be named or remain anonymous will be offered to collaborators in the three-stage process analysis involved in photovoice research (i.e., selecting photos, contextualizing photos through storytelling, and identifying themes) (Wilson, 2008). Photovoice allows for deeper reflection in between the workshops and provides the research collaborators an opportunity to reflect on the broader nuances of the workshops, the relationships they are building, and their own personal growth.

### Table 2. Sharing Circle Guiding Questions.

| Prompt | Question |
|--------|----------|
| How did the workshop make you feel? | What story do you want to share about the experience you’ve just had? |
| What did you think about? | Prompt: How did the workshop make you feel? What did you think about? What did it mean to you? |
| What did it mean to you? | Can you think of a moment that highlights your experience? |
|Did the workshop have an impact on your well-being? | Prompt: How did the workshop make you feel? What did you think about? What did it mean to you? |
|How did the workshop influence the way you understand yourself as an Indigenous man? | How did the workshop influence the way you understand yourself as an Indigenous man? |

**Sharing Circle Guiding Questions.**
**Individual Interviews**

Individual interviews will be conducted with collaborators who engage and participate in the research to not just get answers to specific questions but also offer the men participating the opportunity to disclose information on a one-on-one basis, especially if they feel uncomfortable sharing in a group setting. Interviews will follow a semi-structured qualitative guide. They will be audio-taped and will take approximately 30 minutes to an hour. The interviews will focus on men’s individual experiences engaging and participating in land-based learning activities. The interview questions will be determined collaboratively with all research partners to ensure the questions that are being asked will be useful for the Ohitika/Ogichidaa (Warrior) programs for future funding applications. Due to feedback on other individual interviews with Indigenous men (Waddell et al., 2021), the researchers will memorize the interview questions and prompts to be able to provide an engaged, conversational format. Additionally, all consent within the individual interviews will be determined orally. Collaborators will be provided with a gift card for participation in the individual interviews because participation in the individual interviews is over and above expected workshop participation. The individual interviews are also scheduled after all workshops have been completed to ensure that the men and the researchers have had a chance to develop a respectful relationship.

**Data Management and Analysis**

Data management in this project is completely dependent on the principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP) (First Nations Centre, 2007). A collaborative research agreement was developed at the beginning of the last research partnership (Waddell et al., 2020), and this agreement was revisited and re-written at the start of this new project. This document is amended on a regular basis to ensure that all partners feel represented and respected within the research relationship. There is recognition that the knowledge is co-created, and therefore, research plans and dissemination strategies are also co-created. Relational accountability, respectful representation, reciprocal appropriation, and rights and regulations are always considered in all decision-making processes (Louis, 2007). Sharing Circle, photovoice conversations, and individual interviews will be transcribed by the research assistants engaged in the workshops and relationship building with the men. Having the research assistants present in the space, with a knowledge of the men, will assist them in ensuring that the interviews are transcribed appropriately. Ethnographic observations will be documented as field notes by all the researchers present, and timelines of events for the workshops will be recorded to document process and procedures. Additionally, researchers will provide reflection on the workshops and consider how respect, relevancy, reciprocity and responsibility are being integrated into the research and the collection of information. All these different data sources will be compared, analyzed, coded, and discussed amongst all research partners. Data analysis will occur simultaneously with data collection to support the refinement of research methods (see Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1997). All transcripts will be analyzed using NVivo technology in a process of inductive analysis with a minimum of two research partners. Coding will occur in larger segments, rather than line by line, to preserve the authenticity and integrity of the stories (Butina, 2015; Hallet et al., 2017; Waddell et al., 2021). After analysis, all research partners will verify the codes, develop themes, and determine the connections between the themes. Research team members, community partners, and collaborators will work collaboratively to discuss interpretations of all data analyzed, as well as identify and resolve any inconsistencies through consensus, to ensure that the stories are being interpreted through the perspective of the community and not just for the purposes of research (Bird et al., 2009).

**Translating Knowledge**

This research is guided by a research team, partners from various community organizations, and collaborators. The knowledge gained from this project will be disseminated in a variety of ways to ensure uptake from different audiences. Reports will be made for all research partners to distribute within their organizations and posted on the Centre for Critical Studies in Rural Mental Health website. Manuscripts will be authored by all research partners and submitted to scholarly publications, such as Canadian Journal of Native Studies and the Journal of Rural and Community Development, both open-access, peer-reviewed journals. Presentations will be conducted in academic peer-reviewed settings and local non-peer-reviewed settings. Additionally, a community celebration and photovoice exhibition was deemed valuable by the community partners and collaborators as it will showcase the experience of Indigenous men to assist non-Indigenous people to see and understand what land-based learning means to Indigenous men.

**Ethical Considerations**

This research project was approved by Brandon University Ethics Committee (BUREC #22886). Additionally, the Community-Based Research Agreement (CBRA) clearly indicates the aspects of OCAP crucial for this research with Indigenous peoples. All research partners have agreed to the CBRA, and it will be followed in all aspects of the project. The Indigenous men participating in the workshops will be offered opportunity to participate in the research. Due to the complexity of the research project and data collection, information and consent forms have been developed for different portions of the research. The first is for the ethnographic observation and Sharing Circles involved in the workshops. Men will receive an information and consent form that provides them with information about the study, the perceived
Lastly, con
through multiple research partners (Indigenous and Western). Sharing Circles, individual interviews, and photovoice) and
angulation of multiple data sources (ethnographic observation, researchers. Additionally, validity is ensured through the tri-
Indigenous ways of knowing and not solely by Western re-
sure the research is analyzed and shared consistently with
partners and owned by the local Indigenous organization. The
provides information about the use and ownership of the
pictures will be used by the community research partners and owned by the local Indigenous organization. The
use of the photographs will be approved by the Indigenous community researchers, in order to abide by the OCAP principles determined in the partnership.

Lastly, a script has been developed for the final individual interviews. If men choose to participate in the final evaluation interviews, an informed consent script will be read to them in the beginning of the interview. This oral consent will be audio-recorded in the interview prior to the first question. Oral consent for individual interviews was determined to be an appropriate method of informed consent after feedback from Indigenous men in a previous research project, to “drop the formalities” regarding paper consent forms (Waddell et al., 2020; p. 3).

Although it is anticipated that this study will provide many opportunities for Indigenous men to share in an open, safe environment while learning cultural teachings and traditional hunting practices, there is a risk that some of the conversations may be triggering for participants and researchers. Participants will be supported throughout the process by the community research partners, Gobeil and Tacan, who are skilled facilitators and group leaders. Additionally, the men participating will be provided a brochure created specifically by the research team for Indigenous men, with local resources and tips for coping with difficult feelings.

Rigor and Proposed Outcomes

There are numerous factors integrated into this research project that ensure rigor within the design. For instance, the collaborative nature of the research process, integrating Western and Indigenous ways of knowing with a two-eyed seeing approach, ensures credibility of the findings by making sure the research is analyzed and shared consistently with Indigenous ways of knowing and not solely by Western researchers. Additionally, validity is ensured through the triangulation of multiple data sources (ethnographic observation, Sharing Circles, individual interviews, and photovoice) and through multiple research partners (Indigenous and Western). Lastly, confirmability will be ensured by multiple research partners being involved in data analysis through initial coding or confirming the codes and the themes. Overall, this research project provides opportunity to evaluate land-based teaching and cultural connection of Indigenous men through drum-making workshops. The findings of this research study will provide insight into the methods that Indigenous men use to claim and reclaim identity, culture, and wellness. Additionally, the evaluation has the potential to provide community partners with needed information to receive further funding and support for wellness programs tailored to urban Indigenous men, using culture and traditional land-based learning.

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Notes

1. All Indigenous Ceremonies (Sharing Circles and Sweat Lodges) as well as Indigenous titles (Knowledge Keeper and Spiritual Leader) are capitalized in this manuscript at the direction of Spiritual Leader, Frank Tacan.
2. In addition to the teachings, the women researchers were also provided their colors from Spiritual Leader Frank Tacan. They were then taught by an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper how to sew ribbon skirts. These ribbon skirts are worn by the women in all ceremonies involved in the workshops.

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