

Communicating Research Through Creative Art in Indigenous Communities

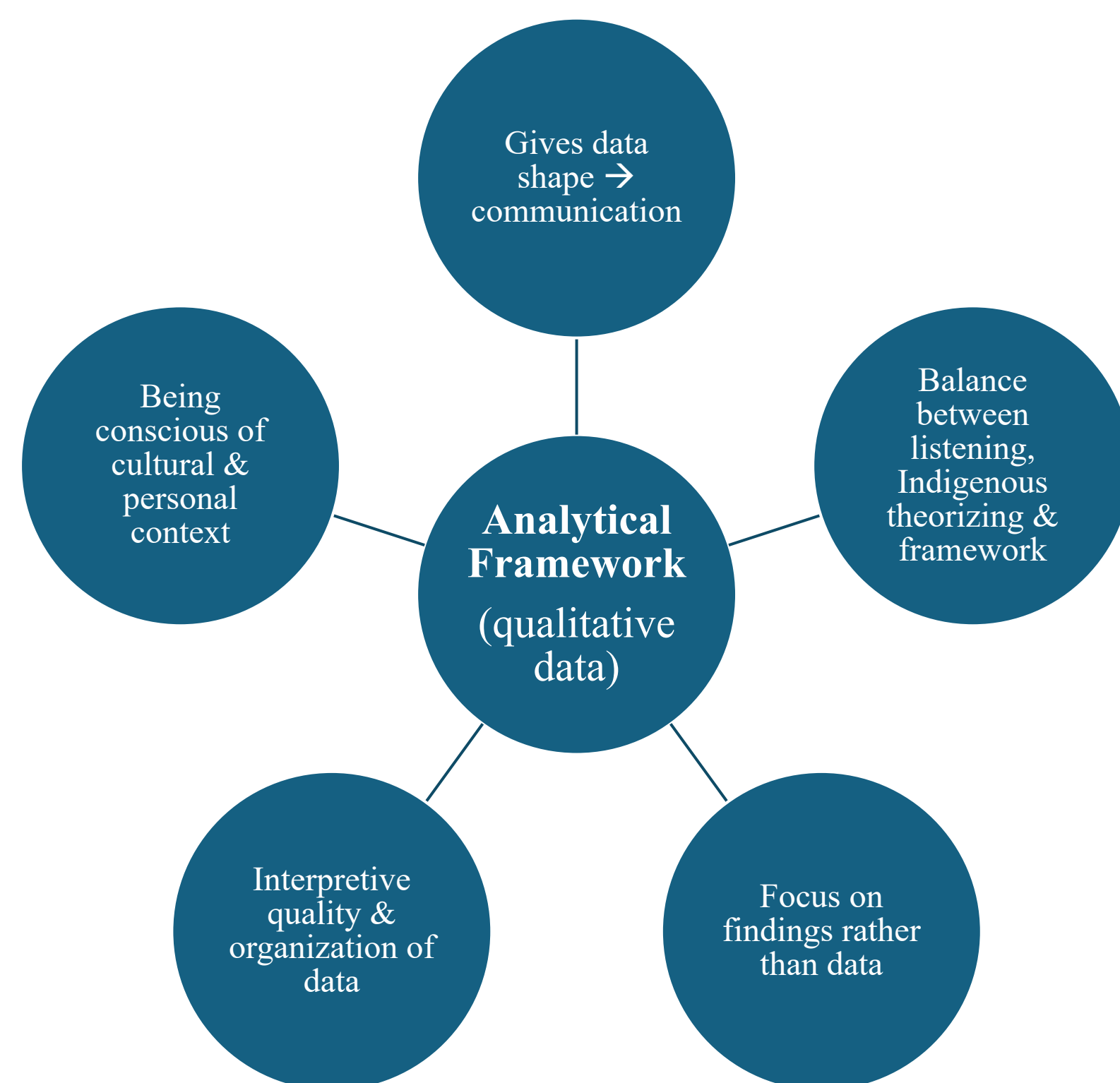
Abstract

Art is shown in Indigenous cultures as a key component in storytelling, serving as a symbolic and relational bridge that connects a community. Using art in research has been shown to benefit the community by symbolizing research and communicating knowledge to diverse audiences, from children to elders. Art-based approaches within Indigenous methodologies reflect principles of self-determination and community collaboration, transforming research from an extractive process into a research that benefits the community. This project evaluates existing Indigenous art-based research to highlight how creative expression functions as a methodology rather than solely as dissemination. Through qualitative community research, artists can create metaphors that embody ideas, experiences, and cultural knowledge. Incorporating creative media allows researchers and communities to engage collaboratively and reflect. Ultimately, demonstrating that art is not supplementary to Indigenous research but a foundational element in Indigenous methodologies.

Background

Qualitative data: (relationship, stories, & words)

- Interpretive → research analysis (research & community)
- Traditional positivity outcomes
- Tells stories rather than #'s
- Offers insights



Community-centered research:

- Centers community, not the individual
- Builds trust reciprocity, and relevance
- Resist extractive research practices
- Supports Indigenous knowledge and self-determination

Methods

Indigenous Grounded	Youth Leaderships	Cultural Workshop (Three Days)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indigenous-led project → #TAG: Transformation, Action, Graffiti • Inspired by a dream & spiritual guidance • Centered Kayanere’kowa (The Great Law of Peace): peace, power and good mind • Incorporating knowledge by elders, knowledge keepers, & community members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hired Youth Advisory Council (YAC) led by Indigenous • Aid in recruitment: 22 young people (11 non-Indigenous & 11 Indigenous) • Shape the vision • Guide the workshop and theme • Four total (2 non-Indigenous, 2 Indigenous) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Led by Haudenosaunee knowledge keepers • Topics: culture, language, sovereignty, food, ceremonies, treaties, historical agreement between Six Nations & Brantford, colonization, decolonization, resistance, artistic practice, language, resident • In session: doodled and visual expression • Reflected on what they learned



The Six Nations Mural: elements of Haudenosaunee creation story, clans, & Condor prophecy



The Brantford Mural: Relationship between non-Indigenous & Indigenous people as they travel down the river

Mural Design	Community Output
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth’s drawings input from workshop & YAC • Mural design → artist, youth, & community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants post-workshop (6 months) • Interviewed the community post-murals to get their understanding

Quotes from Community:

‘The one on Six Nations is stunning. It’s absolutely breathtaking and it’s so dense with our teachings. It’s just in one picture it connects us to the water, to the lands, to the cosmos, to the families. I see leadership in there. I see all kinds of things in there. (Indigenous Community Member)’

‘[W]e made a peace treaty a long time ago. And there’s two purple lines and there’s that shade and they don’t end up connecting to each other. And there’s the white lines, they stand for peace. The two purple ones are for the natives and they’re going down with their community and the others stand for everybody else, like the non-natives. And they go down the river in the boats and they don’t mess with each other so to keep the peace. (Indigenous Youth)’

Discussion

- Engaged in youth workshop and collaborative mural creation fostering identity and knowledge
- Research was grounded in Indigenous knowledge through dreams and ancestral guidance
- Community involved throughout the process being Indigenous led showing collective well-being
- Art is medicine → Identity, place, and for the people, & builds community
- Communicating complex symbolism, values, Indigenous solidarity, & community healing
- Art communicate through variation of language making it accessible
- Art is a form of storytelling
- Utilizing art in research it is a step forward in a healing process and ‘restoring the land’

#TAG demonstrates art-based research implemented Indigenous methodologies by centering community, culture, and healing

References and Acknowledgement

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Whitlow, Kawennakon Bonnie, et al. “Taonsayontenroseri:Ye’ne: The Power of Art in Indigenous Research with Youth.” *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, vol. 15, no. 2, June 2019, pp. 180–89. EBSCOhost, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180119845915>.

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