

Teaching Indigenous methodology and an Iñupiaq example

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Abstract

In any graduate research methods course, one must teach the underlying assumptions of various research paradigms, and the interrelated philosophical principles of epistemology, ontology and axiology. At an Alaskan university, many people do research and work with Alaska Native communities, so a grasp of an Alaska Native epistemology is crucial. This paper explores how and why Author One, Maureen Hogan, teaches epistemology (in general) and Indigenous epistemology (in particular) in her graduate field-based research methods course. Second, she reflects upon why she may or may not be successful in this task. Throughout the article, Sean Topkok, Author Two, a recent doctoral student, shares how he developed his own Iñupiaq research method, *Katimarugut*, in the class. To date, an Alaska Native research methodology does not exist. Together, we hope to add one useful model for decolonizing the academy.

Keywords: *Indigenous epistemology; decolonizing the academy; graduate teaching; Iñupiaq methodology; research methods; Katimarugut*

Introduction (*Maureen*)

“I guess I’ll just do a survey,” graduate students often mutter, even after a semester of me teaching them that the methodology they choose for their research says something about the kind, quality and goodness of knowledge a methodological tool will get them. Still, all too often, students “pick” a survey as if choosing a flavor of ice cream. It is not the choice itself that is a problem — surveys can be valuable and appropriate — it is the “choice from nowhere” that disturbs me.

Even if students decide on a qualitative or mixed-method design, or any one of the more common methodological paradigms or tools, it still is not always clear to me that they understand the philosophical underpinnings of those choices. Or, if they do in my research methods class, they sometimes lose that understanding somewhere down the road in the research process.

In any graduate research methods course, one must teach the underlying assumptions of various research paradigms, and the interrelated philosophical principles of epistemology, ontology and axiology. At an Alaskan university, many people research and work with/for Alaska Native communities, so a grasp of an Alaska Native epistemology is crucial. This paper explores how and why Author One, a professor, teaches epistemology (in general) and Indigenous epistemology (in particular) in her graduate field-based research methods course. Second, she reflects upon why she may or may not be successful in this task. Throughout, Author Two, a first-year doctoral student in 2011, shares how he developed his own Iñupiaq methodology, Katimarugut, for his mini-research project in Author One’s methods class, a version upon which his dissertation is centered.

We are doing this project for two important reasons: First we want to be a part of “decolonizing¹ the university” (Battiste, Bell & Findlay, 2002; Findlay, 2000; Hill, 2012; Smith, G., 2003; Smith, L., 1999), a larger struggle that comes from centuries of “cognitive imperialism” (Battiste, 2004). Second, there is still very little work on *teaching* epistemology, which is a problem because epistemology provides the backbone for methodological choices. Furthermore, to date, no documented Alaska Native methodology exists. We intend to fill these gaps. This is important because epistemology — especially Indigenous epistemology — is such a difficult concept for graduate students to understand, and slips easily into other concepts (e.g., ontology, axiology, aesthetics), especially when compared to the foundational, categorical notion of epistemology rooted in Western philosophical and scientific traditions.

ED/CCS 603: Field-based Research Methods (*Maureen*)

The title of my course at The University of Alaska Fairbanks is Field-Based Research Methods, ED/CCS 603, and is cross-listed with Education and Cross-Cultural Studies. It is a graduate course with a pre-requisite, ED 601, an introductory survey of research methods. In my fourteen

¹ Although Graham Smith (2003) prefers the Freirian term “conscientization” over “decolonization” because the

years at UAF, I have taught ED/CCS 603 22 times, each time updating material and refining goals. Because of my vast experience teaching this course, I rely heavily on my own personal, pedagogical and content knowledge, as well as teaching materials, student work and reflections (Morine-Dersheimer & Kent, 1999; Ojanen, S., 1993; Shulman, 1987) for description and evidence. Unlike ED 601, an overview course, this course focuses specifically on field-based research and a culminating project, called a “mini-research project.” The official course description per the syllabus is as follows:

[A] focus on techniques for conducting both quantitative and qualitative field research. Particular emphasis on conducting field research, primarily qualitative and ethnographic, in cross-cultural (especially Indigenous) settings and teacher action research.

The course description reflects our School’s mission, which is “preparing culturally responsive, effective practitioners for Alaska’s schools.” At UAF, our mission has always been to work with cross-cultural, rural Alaska and Alaska Native educational issues. Alaska has 229 predominantly Alaska Native villages (US Census, 2010), with 9 or 10 major ethnic groups (Langdon, 2002) and at least 20 different languages (ANLC, 1974/1982). Alaska Natives make up about 15 % of the total population of Alaska, and live in both urban and rural areas (US Census Bureau, 2010). Importantly, I teach this course like a philosophy of (social) science course rather than a “cookbook” methodology course. With this approach, I hope my students will appreciate the assumptions that undergird their decisions. First, I begin by reviewing the basic tenets of qualitative and quantitative research, which are taught in ED 601, the introductory course mentioned above. After that, we look at the nature of knowledge, the nature of inquiry, and possible research paradigms. As the syllabus states:

The goal of this class is to draw on what you learned in ED 601 (the prerequisite) and deepen your understanding of

- **the nature of knowledge and knowledge production:** Whose knowledge is valued? Why? What kind of knowledge making is possible? At the heart of ALL research is the issue of **knowledge production**.
- **inquiry:** Who gets to ask questions? That is, who are valid inquirers? What kinds of questions can we ask? How do we go about systematically answering those questions?

By focusing on the nature of knowledge and inquiry, I frame the course immediately around the relationship between the *knower* and the *known*, thus problematizing the idea that knowledge is neutral and decontextualized. I also ask questions like: What kind of knowledge do you want to see in the world? What do you want to have a part in creating? I want them to see that they can be both knowledge receivers *and* knowledge producers.

I also specifically state that the course will ask them to question their assumptions about *epistemology* (the nature of knowledge; how we know what we know), *ontology* (the nature and process of being and becoming; what counts as the “stuff” of reality), *axiology* (the ethics of doing certain kinds of research), *methodologies* (generally speaking, qualitative, quantitative or mixed paradigms) and *methods* (the specific tools or instruments for data collection). My larger goal is for them to see how these things work together.

What is epistemology? What is Indigenous epistemology? (Maureen)

Traditional or foundational Western philosophy, like that defined in the estimable *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (SEP), is “the study of knowledge as justified true belief (JTB)” (SEP, 2012). Jack Crumley (2012) writes that epistemology is a *normative* discipline rather than a *descriptive* discipline, and generally attends to propositional knowledge (knowing that) over procedural (knowing how) or personal (experiential) knowledge. It aims to provide standards for knowing, and that “...in order to have knowledge, you must meet certain necessary and sufficient conditions—you have to “measure up” to this standard for knowledge” (Crumley, 2012, p. 16). Accordingly, one must follow steps of formal logic for knowledge to be justifiable, true, and believable and that “some beliefs are better than others” (p. 16).

Still today, Western philosophers and scientists police the boundaries over what counts as knowledge. Philosophers usually presume a pre-cultural, individual, rational, disembodied, aspiritual, unemotional, *idealized* knower. Western scientific thought, with some growing exceptions (see Latour, 1993), is also little interested in social processes; many of its de-contextualized experiments, in labs or the field, are under carefully controlled conditions, with isolated variables, presumably unpolluted by subjectivity. Therefore, “Non-Indigenous learning,” Findlay writes, “which crosses disciplines and cultures but remains unidirectional cannot avoid reinscribing diffusionist colonialism and the only too predictable classification of polymaths and primitives, masters and servants” (2000, p. 313). Undoing and rethinking that which is deeply inscribed is part of our decolonization project.

Indigenous methodology

For about two decades, many Indigenous scholars (Battiste, 2002; Brayboy, 2009; Dei, 2011; Deloria 1995; Kawagley, 1999; Meyer, 1999; Porsanger, 2011; Smith, L., 1999) have argued that Western knowledge is only one kind of knowledge system, and many speak from a position of “colonial difference” that critiques Western philosophy and science (Mignolo, 2002). Deloria, for example, writes that, “The Indian explanation is always cast aside as a superstition, precluding Indians from having an acceptable status as human beings, and reducing them in the eyes of educated people to a pre-human level of ignorance (1995, p. 19). Smith (1999) has argued that Western knowledge, research, reading and writing are all imperial constructs that have served to colonize the minds of both Indigenous peoples and Western ones. Thus, we need

new models of doing research that will de-colonize Western knowledge. Meyer reminds us of martyred priest Ignacio Martin-Barro's quote, "If you do not define your epistemology, someone else will do it for you" (as cited in Meyer, 2001, p. 192).

Indigenous epistemology is one of many social epistemologies in which, proponents argue, knowledge is contextually situated and social actors are culturally and historically constituted at least partially by this local knowledge. Interestingly, despite "the big debate" between Eurocentric and Indigenous philosophers of science, Kawagley and Barnhart (2005) point out the considerable overlap between Native and Western Science, as the diagram below suggests:

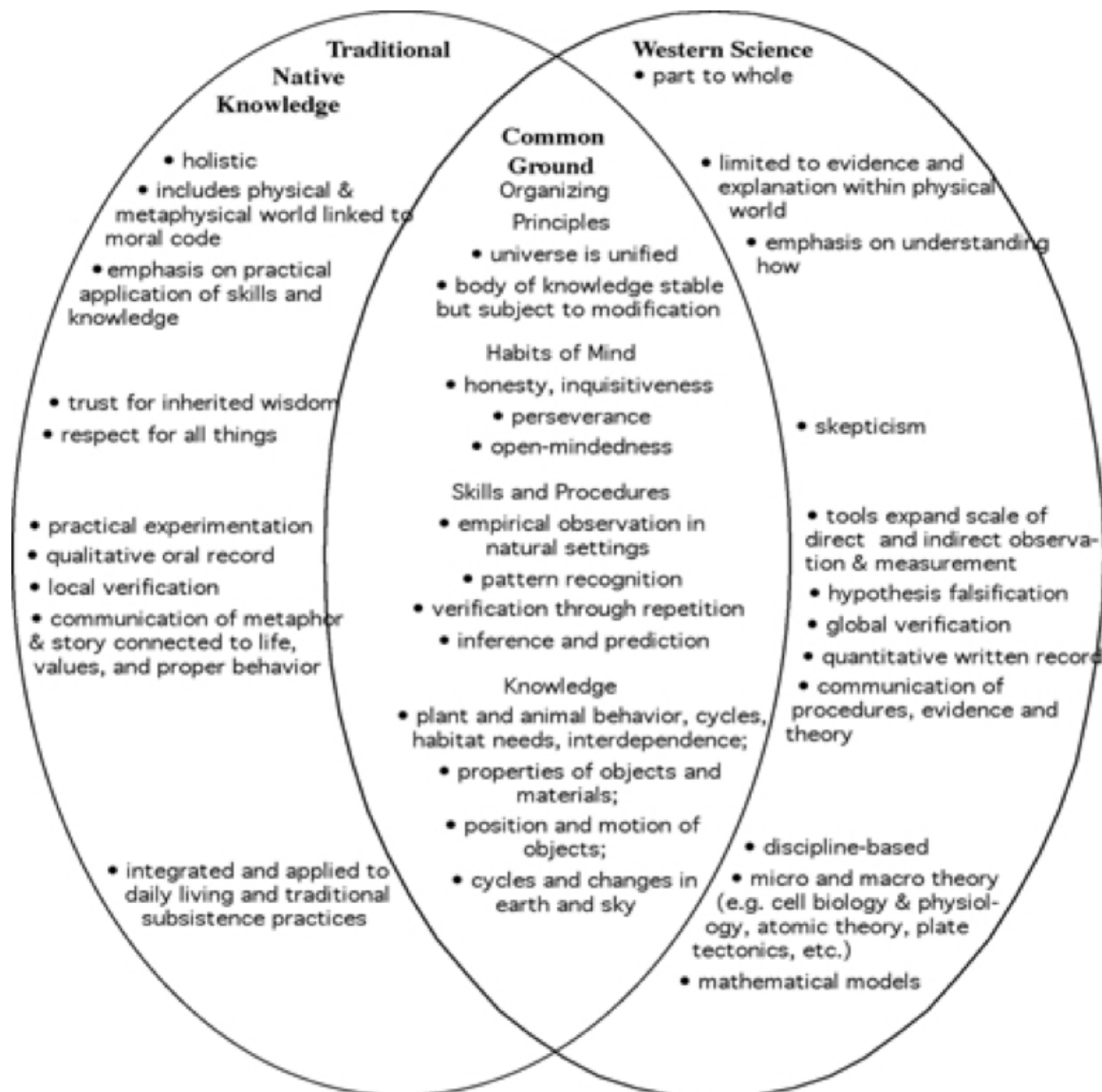


Figure 1: Qualities Associated with Both Traditional Knowledge and Western Science. (Kawagley and Barnhardt, 2005, p. 16)

In discussing this chart, I encourage students to recognize this overlap to see that kinds of knowledge do not sit in essential, static binaries or constructed hierarchies, but rather dialectically, and, one would hope, dialogically with one another. Nonetheless, Western knowledge has continued to dominate other kinds in both science textbooks and scientific output.

Lincoln and Guba meet Mason

So how do I help students recognize their own assumptions about epistemology? For the first assignment in ED/CCS 603, I ask them to draw on Lincoln & Guba's 2000 work, "Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences," a chapter that reviews the possible research paradigms, including *positivist*, *post-positivist*, *constructivist*, *interpretivist*, *criticalist*, and *participatory*. This piece also reviews the major points of contradiction and/or confluence for these different paradigms, which include things like the nature of knowledge, knowledge accumulation, goodness or quality criteria, values, ethics, inquirer posture, and inquirer training (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, pp. 167- 185). The purpose of this chart is to show students that different research paradigms carry different assumptions, and that knowledge making is predicated on certain beliefs. Again, the idea is that methodology comes from somewhere, and is not just a random choice.

After Lincoln and Guba, the students read the first chapter in Jennifer Mason's book *Qualitative Researching* (2004), "Finding a focus and knowing where you stand." In this chapter, Mason asks five important questions that require readers to identify their own philosophies of research, and once identified, to do research in a philosophically consistent way (p. 3.) By assigning this chapter, I hope that students choose research that they truly understand to be good and important, and not just because it will get funding, which has been the case in recent decades with grant funders privileging randomized field trials or mixed-methods (see Lather, 2005). Mason does not want students to "unimaginatively follow textbook recipes or mountains of technical terms, but, to "offer sets of tools, and modes of critical thinking.... [which] require readers *to be able to think themselves into the research process* [my emphasis]...because most of the decisions about research are made by researchers contextually" (p. 2). She wants students to know that "you cannot simply pick and choose bits of one and bits of another in an ad hoc way..." (p. 15). Through this reading, I encourage students to see that methodology is epistemologically meaningful and politically purposeful.

Below are Mason's five important questions (the first question in italics) followed by my explanatory comments for students:

1. *What is the nature of the phenomena, or entities, or social 'reality,' which I wish to investigate?* This is asking for an ontological perspective, and identifying different ontological properties that reveal that being in the world is reflected in language. For example, I ask my students to consider the differences between these words: *mind*, *consciousness*, *brain*, *thoughts*, *cognition*, *schema*, *neurons*,

ideas, psyche. All of these things engage topics in very different ways, and are ontologically influenced.

2. *What might represent knowledge or evidence of the entities or social realities that I want to investigate?* This gets at students' epistemological position – it is asking for their theory of knowledge. I ask them to consult the aforementioned Lincoln and Guba chart for this one.
3. *What topic, or broad substantive area, is the research concerned with?*
4. *What is the intellectual puzzle? What do I wish to explain or explore? What type of puzzle is it?* Mason's puzzles include developmental, mechanical, comparative and causal-predictive (p. 18).
5. *What are my research questions?*

Mason says that one question follows from the other, that there is consistency and flow, that the logic of one thing exposes the logic of the next, and reveals the logic of one's assumptions, and that all of this needs to become a "habit of active self-reflexivity" (p. 22).

In the first course paper, I ask students to have Lincoln and Guba "dialogue" with Jennifer Mason to answer these questions.² They refer back to Lincoln and Guba's chart to look at the different paradigms and different epistemological, ontological and methodological assumptions. To scaffold, I give them an example paper that I do.

Students are then asked to write the paper by answering each of Jennifer Mason's questions, drawing on Lincoln and Guba's chart. I ask them where they feel their inclinations lie at this time, vis-à-vis paradigms, in terms of their assumptions about research. They tell me they find this paper challenging but rewarding, and have never been asked these questions before. Interestingly, they rarely describe themselves as positivist or post-positivist in this assignment; rather, they see themselves as constructivist or participatory. Yet, later, many fall back on Western scientific assumptions, especially the ingrained notion of objectivity, putting them right back to a more positivistic stance.

Sean took up this assignment beyond Mason's parameters in order to find his own Indigenous intellectual puzzle. He wrote:

What would an intellectual puzzle within an Indigenous paradigm look like? Mason's framework of intellectual puzzles connects "ontological and epistemological positions" (p. 18). ...[M]y intellectual puzzle would most likely be called an *adaptive* puzzle. An adaptive puzzle examines how *x* or *y* adapts to situations or environments. Indigenous people have shown their adaptability even before Western contact, and we continue to demonstrate our adaptability in contemporary times. Another example of my intellectual puzzle is *resilience*. A resilience puzzle examines how *x* or *y* have recovered from adversity. This

² I thank Dr. Lindsay Bell for this idea.

assignment helped me identify my intellectual puzzle, and I have included much of the written assignments from this course in my dissertation.

By thinking through his own cultural context and values, Sean extends Mason's offering of arguably Western intellectual puzzles to add two of his own that make more sense for *Katimarugut*. In this way, he is "talking back" (hooks, 1989) to the academy in a project of decolonization

Indigenous Epistemologies: Kawagley, Smith, Wilson & Meyer

Next, I offer many examples of Indigenous epistemology and methodology. I start with the work of Alaska Native (Yup'ik) scholar Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley, mentioned earlier. He was perhaps our most important Alaska Native philosopher, and spent his career articulating a Yupiaq epistemology or "way of knowing." He reminds us that nature *is* the metaphysic, that Ellam Yua (the Creative Force) is everywhere in nature. According to Kawagley, the base word for this is Ella, which epitomizes Yupiaq philosophy. The word 'Ella' is powerful and can variously refer to "weather, awareness, world, creative force, god, universe and sky. It captures both knowing and being. The key word is awareness, or consciousness" (p. 14). I cannot think of a similarly flexible or multivalent word in English.

For Kawagley, the land is sacred. All living things have a consciousness, and a spirit. The spiritual, natural and human realms are interrelated and must be in balance, as can be seen in his tetrahedral model below:

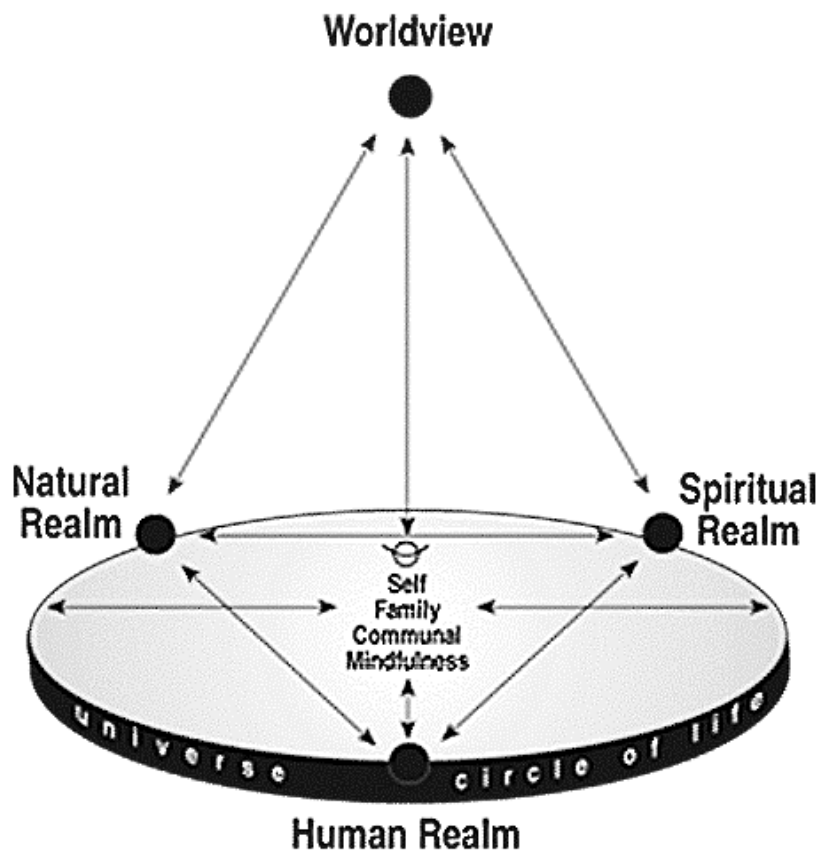


Figure 2. Kawagley's Tetrahedral Model

All things are connected, so knowledge is holistic rather than compartmentalized. The Yup'ik rely heavily on observation as a way of knowing for survival, but unlike many Western scientists, "the Yupiat [also] accept that which is unknowable, uncontrollable, and immeasurable" (1999, p. 14). This awareness reflects a much broader-yet-deeper epistemology than most of my students are used to, as well as a healthy tolerance for ambiguity.

Knowledge is passed down from the Elders by example, by showing and telling stories, Kawagley tells us. They combine the empirical, the subconscious and intuition, with mindful awareness. They observe and notice different variables and change. Furthermore, Kawagley informs, "You have to meditate, visualize, intuit and temper all thoughts and actions with the heart. For some, even evil thoughts (not words or deeds) can change the balance of the universe" (pp. 24-25).

Sean describes his relationship with Dr. Angayuqaq (Oscar) Kawagley, and how the latter's work has influenced him:

Angayuqaq's research reminds me of the Iñupiaq value *Kanijqsimauraaliq* *Irrutchikun* (Spirituality). Oscar was on my graduate committee before he passed

in April 2011. He was one of my mentors who encouraged me to enter into the Ph. D. Program in Indigenous Studies... Angayuqaq's research inspires many Indigenous graduate students, as he coined the phrase "Native ways of knowing." In his dissertation, Angayuqaq draws upon the knowledge taught to him by his grandmother. He describes his Yupiaq worldview using a tetrahedral model including the natural, human, and spiritual realms. Angayuqaq writes, "This tetrahedral framework allows for triangulation whereby human beings can locate themselves in relation to the other domains of their existence and check to make sure that the values and traditions are in balance" (Kawagley, 1993, p. 17). His research and framework help guide my own research and framework, recognizing and seeking knowledge and Native values passed down by our ancestors. My Iñupiaq Ilitqusi Framework allows a cultural value to locate itself in relation to other cultural values to maintain balance.

Linda Smith

I have been able to include Maori scholar Linda Smith's 1999 groundbreaking and now classic text, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, since I began at UAF. I have students read, often for their first time, about the history of imperialism for economic expansion, contested histories, and research through "imperial eyes." Smith writes about research as a Western cultural formation, and the "positional superiority" of Western knowledge (p. 59). Smith is especially critical of scientific research, which, she says, "[has] a history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity" (p. 1). Thus, she argues, research needs to be decolonized.

But what would that look like? Linda Smith gives us 25 Indigenous Projects, which include: claiming, testimonies, story telling, celebrating survival, remembering, indigenizing, intervening, revitalizing, connecting, reading, writing, representing, gendering, envisioning, reframing, restoring, returning, democratizing, networking, naming, protecting, creating, negotiating, discovering and sharing (pp. 142-161). All are gerunds implying action, making a change and working toward self-determination. Although her big goal is to develop Indigenous people as researchers (p. 17), many of these collaborative projects can also be undertaken by partnering with non-indigenous researchers and organizations (p. 161). Sean reflects on Smith's influence:

As described above, Linda Smith's chapter, "Twenty-Five Indigenous Projects;" each project has action titles: writing, naming, networking, claiming, etc. (1999, pp. 142-162). I have named my Iñupiaq method and methodology Katimarugut meaning, "We Are Meeting." I did not want to call this methodology Qargi, even though it is a place for meetings. Like Smith suggests, this Iñupiaq methodology is an action, not an object because our language is based on our verbs or actions. Our vocabulary focuses on verbs, and some Iñupiaq phrases do not even require a subject. We start with a word like "walk" and then depending on the ending of the word, identify a possible subject. In the Kobuk dialect, *Pisruktuq* is 'he or she is

walking,' while pisruktut is 'they (three or more) are walking.' In contrast, English is based on nouns or things. Many English phrases start with a noun, followed by a verb. The base "katima-" (to meet) with the ending "-rugut" (first-person plural 'we') makes my methodology verb-based, an Iñupiaq way of conducting research. I include myself as a member of the research participants when I am conducting my research; when I am a participant-observer I use first-person (I) (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, pp. 91-93). But the word Katimarugut is of third-person plural (we).

The chart below represents Smith's metaphor of four open, major tides: survival, recovery, development and self-determination. At its heart, Linda Smith's *Indigenous Research Agenda* is about self-determination. It seeks transformation through decolonization.

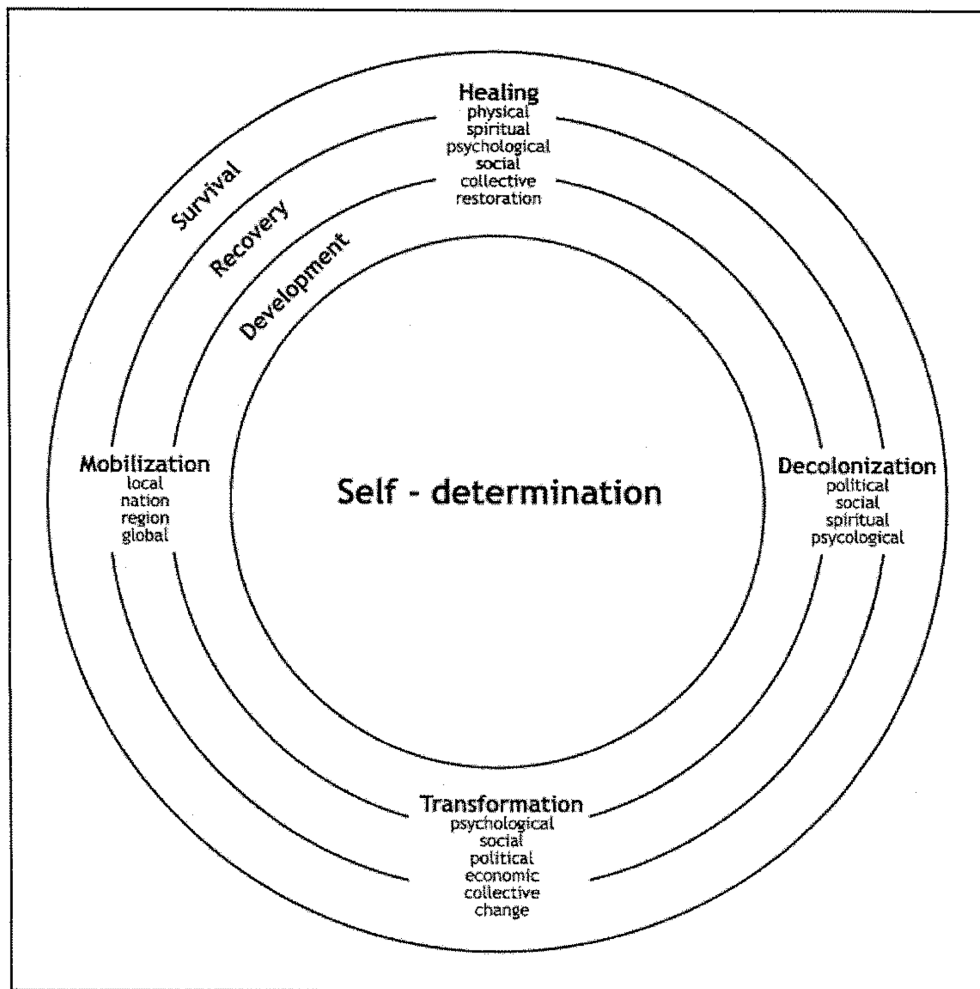


Figure 2.1 The Indigenous Research Agenda (Source: Smith, 1999: 117).

Figure 3. The Indigenous Research Agenda. (Smith, 1999, p. 117)

Of all the texts I include in my class, this one brings up the most emotional and defensive responses, with some students citing reverse discrimination and describing Smith “as a *very angry person*.” Missing the broader point of institutional and historical systemic racism, they might say, “Well I am not racist.” Or, “Well, that was in the past. Let’s move forward.” I have heard these kinds of comments from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. In one dialogue I had to intervene and remind students to be polite. Nonetheless, I persistently include it, with time for extensive dialogue both in-person and electronically, so they can see first, how white privilege works and, second, how Indigenous knowledge has been historically colonized. Such discourse can cultivate a “pedagogy of discomfort” (Boler, 1999; Zemblyas & Boler, 2000) in the class, which needs to be embraced, not ignored, so that all of us can grow.

Shawn Wilson

Another book I include is Shawn Wilson’s *Research is Ceremony*. For Wilson, epistemology “includes entire systems of thinking or styles of cognitive functioning that are built upon specific ontologies.” It asks, “How do I know what’s real?” (p. 33). Like the other Indigenous scholars mentioned in this paper, two key themes that tie them all together are relationality and awareness. For Wilson, relationality is so important that “...*for Indigenous people, research is a ceremony* [ital. in original]...everyone who is participating needs to step beyond the everyday and to accept a raised state of consciousness” (p. 69).

My students love this book. Wilson’s is a conversational, readable style, at times using letters to his children, while trying to articulate what an Indigenous methodology is. He comes up with ‘research is ceremony’, because reality *itself* is about relationships. He explains: “Research by and for Indigenous peoples is a ceremony that brings relationships together” (p. 8). This includes relationships to other living things, the land, objects and places. Everything is connected and everything is whole, and as such, is as sacred as a ceremony.



Figure 4. Shawn Wilson’s Research Paradigm. (Wilson, 2008, p. 70)

What I find fascinating about Wilson's figure is that this wholeness extends to epistemology, axiology, ontology and methodology. They cannot be separated into separate branches of philosophy, as most Western philosophers do. They all interconnect because, for Wilson, one must have a methodology that *simultaneously* considers knowledge, ethics, being and doing. I recall Sean finding resonance with Wilson's work:

I utilize a perspective from Wilson's book wherein an Indigenous scholar shares: "This is how I look at an Indigenous cultural system, an Indigenous way of doing things. Say you have a fire, and you have people sitting in a circle around the fire. And you ask any person to describe the fire. While they are describing it, and you are looking at the same fire, it's not the same thing. But that doesn't mean they are wrong. They are at a different vantage point altogether. So we say, if we share this information in the circle, we share this experience, the collective experience; we will get a bigger picture" (Wilson, 2008, p. 112). Similarly, while we are discussing each Iñupiat Ilitqusi, each person has his or her own view of the Iñupiaq value. There may be some similar experiences, and some people may have some different views. Having these different vantage points shared with each other during Katimarugut, helps to provide a collective understanding. The process of Katimarugut may help us find out more about this reality. This collective knowledge making is, as Wilson suggests, much like a sacred ceremony.

Manu Meyer

Another piece in our journey to understand Indigenous epistemology includes Manu Meyer's *Acultural assumptions of empiricism: A Native Hawaiian critique* (2001), a piece that questions empirical research that neglects culture. We also watch a video she has on YouTube about epistemology.³ In this video, we learn that for Indigenous Hawaiians, *aloha* (love) is the epistemology, just as Kawagley's Ella is the metaphysic. Meyer says that knowledge is different than information and understanding: "Information is around you "out there" but knowledge goes *through you* and understanding is *aloha*, love and service to others." So, she says, "we have information, knowledge and understanding, but understanding is the highest frequency, and the one that is most important" (YouTube).

Like the other Indigenous scholars we read, Meyer's epistemology, if applied to research methodology, reveals much more than considering the research question and what will help answer it. Going beyond raw empiricism and the dispassionate researcher, Manu's idea includes what fits, what sustains relationships, what helps restore balance and harmony; what is respectful and reciprocal; and what honors history, biography and emotionality. The goal is not just about information and knowledge production, she says, but also, ultimately, *the production of understanding*.

³ See: <http://www.zengardner.com/manu-aluli-meyer-indigenous-epistemology/>

By assigning work by Indigenous scholars like Kawagley, Smith, Wilson and Meyer, I try to open up new intellectual spaces, nurture a new consciousness, and challenge the deep colonization of the mind. For many Indigenous researchers like Wilson, epistemology, ontology and axiology cannot be separated because mind, body/being and ethics are already intertwined, forming cultural views and values. The work of Indigenous scholars all point to a framework that is more holistic, relational and spiritual than most Western models will allow.

So why do students “just do a survey”?⁴ (Maureen)

To answer this question, I reflect, below, based on my 13 years of teaching ED/CCS 603:

1. The survey is what they truly want to do: It gets at the question they want to ask, and it resonates with their epistemological stance.
2. I am not doing a good enough job explaining, scaffolding, modeling, choosing/ordering my sources, or giving them examples of emerging Indigenous methodologies.
3. They want to do something fast and relatively easy. An on-line survey done with *Survey Monkey* can analyze and display the data in neat little charts.
4. We live in a survey society. Surveys are normalized, its assumptions rarely questioned. As Dei (2011) writes, “ Indigenous knowledge is contested knowledge...that aims to make very uncomfortable the imperial procedures of knowledge making” (p. 22).
5. Positivistic and post-positivistic methodologies attract funding.
6. One does not have to invest in human relationships and everything can be done anonymously. Thus, it is safe and requires little emotional-social work.
7. If the researcher is non-Indigenous, he or she can feel like an interloper using Indigenous methodologies, and thus back off. Even though Alaska Native participants value sharing, and Smith welcomes non-Indigenous allies, they lack the deep, embodied, instinctual cultural knowledge necessary to feel legitimate.
8. Indigenous knowledge includes the realm of spirituality. Indigenous research asks us to open up to spirituality and metaphysics, myth and storytelling, along with relationships with the land and animals, and the idea that all living things have a consciousness. This is difficult for many people to accept because of Battiste’s “cognitive imperialism,” and in the United States, authoritative discourses of science and philosophy.

⁴ For me, the survey has almost become a metaphor now, for well-known and established Western methods.

9. Indigenous research means you have to do something truly good for the community, something they want, in which they participate. Your own agenda as a researcher cannot be foisted upon participants.
10. Since Indigenous research is about relationships, you have to spend the time to build those relationships with trust and respect. This is a lot of emotional work that can take years to establish, so the researchers (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous) must be patient.
11. Learning about new epistemologies asks the students to re-think their own worldview and their own assumptions. They are especially nervous about letting go of research as purely objective. Again, this reflects their continued worry about being biased, which probably comes from years of learning Western scientific knowledge, and a simplistic framework of subjectivity.
12. Not all graduate committee members may see Indigenous methodologies as legitimate, thus putting a graduate student in a place of defensive vulnerability.

I am sure there are more. I do not want to force my students into an Indigenous framework, but I do try to teach them that methodology *means something*, that it is not just a random or pragmatic choice, and that it goes beyond just finding the most efficient way of collecting data. The process itself says something about the kind of knowledge they want to see in the world, and the inevitable and intimate relationship with the knower and the known. All of this opens up new possibilities for both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous researchers, and validates Indigenous knowledge systems.

Going back to Sean's work, this intellectual breathing room in my class was a space to try out a new Iñupiaq methodology. A worksheet, not mentioned above, was required for the mini-research project for my course, including 14 questions to help guide students' organization. Of this worksheet, Sean said:

One of the questions was, "What general methods do you plan to use (qualitative, quantitative, mixed)?" After carefully examining the available theoretical frameworks and thinking about our Iñupiaq cultural values, I could not identify a relevant methodology. In 2011, I answered:

I need to use Iñupiaq cultural inquiries in order to conduct research with Iñupiat people, in order to be culturally sensitive. When we have *Katimarugut* (We are Meeting), stories and experiences shared by the participants may include qualitative data. So I will most likely utilize a qualitative approach, following an Iñupiaq methodology practiced for generations, and now applied and formalized for Western academia.

Our place and spirit are not separated. *Katimarugut* (We are Meeting) is situated in Iñupiaq cultural heritage and spirituality by sharing our personal stories and stories of our ancestors. I asked myself, "How does *Katimarugut* contribute to further research?" Other Indigenous researchers may borrow the idea of their ancestral methodologies as their own, but would most likely identify it in their own language and cultural values because it is local, particular and situated.

For my course, Sean did a mini-research project on the Iñupiaq cultural values in his dance group—a group whose very purpose was to learn about cultural values through dancing and sharing. Feeling connected to the Indigenous research frameworks he was learning about, he decided to develop his own Iñupiaq methodology, which, like Shawn Wilson's, includes epistemology, ontology and axiology as a holistic, culturally relevant methodology. In the next section, he explains *Katimarugut*, or “We are Meeting” in full.

Katimarugut (We Are Meeting) - An Iñupiaq Methodology (Sean)

Qayaq was a magical traveler who explored Alaska in search for his lost older brothers. After walking for much of his trip, he decided to make a birch bark kayak. He would gather and carve the materials needed and then go to sleep to continue the work the next day. When Qayaq awoke in the morning, the pieces that he prepared were assembled without his knowledge, with obvious signs that this was done by more than one worker. After several nights of this being repeated, Qayaq stayed awake to witness the work. He saw various animals working together to build his kayak. (Northwest Alaska Elders, 1991, pp. 97-99)

In the story of Qayaq, the animals worked together to help Qayaq. He did not ask for assistance, but the animals helped build the kayak. The animals are members of the natural community. The Qayaq metaphor reflects the spiritual animals as the participants in my research, Qayaq as me going through my research journey, and the qayaq and encounters are the research and cultural values. In this Iñupiaq *unipkaa* (legend) I can identify with Qayaq learning along his journey and receiving help from my community. Without them, my task would be more laborious and less valid; for that I am ever so thankful.

Introduction to Katimarugut

In my dissertation methodology chapter, I introduce Katimarugut, an Iñupiaq research methodology translated, “We are meeting.” Though the Iñupiat have practiced this methodology for generations, the term Katimarugut has never been formalized for research. I discuss my doctoral research methods on Iñupiat Ilitqusiat (Iñupiaq values) by gathering stories and views from other Iñupiat. Elders have documented a concern that Iñupiaq values are not being transmitted to Iñupiat children (McNabb, 1991; VNN, 1996; Schaeffer & Christensen, 2010). Reggie Joule states, “Unfortunately, today many children are not being taught through example, the values which they will need to be self-sufficient” (VNN, 1996). I assert that in order to conduct culturally appropriate research with Iñupiat people, it is imperative to observe cultural protocols and values within an Iñupiaq methodology.

In this section, an Iñupiaq way of conducting research is introduced and how these methods inform the dissertation research questions. I include the Iñupiaq values from Northwest Alaska Elders, and our examination of each value are discussed and observed while we are

meeting. My doctoral research questions include: 1) How do the participants view each cultural value? 2) How have our Iñupiat Ilitqusiāt (Iñupiaq Values) been passed down to the participants? and 3) How do we pass down our Iñupiaq cultural heritage to our future cultural-bearers?

Other Indigenous methodologies

Before Western contact, the Hawaiians and Māori had gatherings and meetings called hui (Salmond, 1985). They still call it a hui. In Summer 2011, I attended the 2nd Annual International Hui held at Chena Hot Springs, Alaska. Participants were Indigenous scholars from Australia, Aotearoa, Canada, Hawai'i, Arizona, Montana, and Alaska. At this hui, we discussed issues pertaining to Indigenous graduate students at the international level. The concept and methodology of hui is significant particularly for Indigenous scholarship because it provides an example where an Indigenous method of gathering data through meetings and research has been formalized and practiced. The Iñupiat have held meetings before Western contact, but a nomenclature for these meetings has never been formalized, making Katimarugut an original contribution to Indigenous and non-Indigenous research.

Dr. Graham Smith, a Māori scholar from Aotearoa (New Zealand) was the foundation chairperson of the Council for Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi: Indigenous-university in Whakatāne” (He Kākano, [n.d.](#)). He continues to work closely with Alaska Native and other Indigenous scholars worldwide, providing guidance through the initiatives in Aotearoa (New Zealand). At the Alaska Native Studies Conference in 2013, he stated that Indigenous researchers need to use their own knowledge for theoretical frameworks. As Indigenous scholars gained higher degrees, identifying a methodology was mostly from a Western perspective. We need to recognize our own Indigenous ways of thinking, and we need to formalize our own Indigenous methodologies, which is gaining momentum (Kawagley, 1993; Leonard, 2007; Archibald, 2008; Wilson, 2008; John, 2009; Lewis, 2009; Counciller, 2010).

Indigenous scholars encourage Indigenous doctoral students to use their own cultural heritage as a ‘valid’ source of knowledge (Jacobs, 2008). As Indigenous researchers, we have a responsibility to meet the bureaucratic requirement of written publication, but must also write for and with Indigenous communities, Western academics, and Indigenous scholars, the latter being the most critical (Kovach, 2009). Any research about an Indigenous community should be written in vocabulary that the community could understand. At the same time, Indigenous scholars are the most critical toward other Indigenous scholars, setting high expectations for each other to demonstrate Indigenous ways of researching to be very academic. It is an unwritten understanding that Indigenous graduate committee members are under a microscope by some non-Indigenous committee members to make sure that the Indigenous scholar is not being too lenient on the Indigenous graduate student.

Gathering data utilizing cultural protocols

In the qargi (Iñupiaq meeting hall), community members would speak whenever they felt it necessary to speak. This method may be related to an Indigenous talking circle, but we do not sit and go around in a circle. A similar method would be like a town hall meeting, with specific Iñupiaq cultural protocols that we must follow. These cultural protocols are a method that develops in response to a system of values. One of our protocols is to allow our Elders, or older members within the group, to talk first so we can all learn from their experiences, and to allocate time at the closing of the meeting to reflect on what had been said, allowing the Elders to provide final thoughts. Another cultural protocol observed is to not interrupt a person, providing an opportunity for that individual to communicate what she or he wants share without breaking her or his train of thought. There are other cultural protocols, which cannot be explained, but rather a person must experience Katimarugut in order to understand it.

The Iñupiat Elders are concerned that the Iñupiat people, because of the introduction of foreign cultures, are living a destructive lifestyle (Napoleon, 1996). The Elders identified our Iñupiaq Values, which we have lived for thousands of years, to officially document what every Iñupiaq should know about our cultural heritage. Listening to our Elders helps strengthen the resiliency of our community.

Dr. Catherine Swan Reimer (1999), an Iñupiaq psychologist from Kotzebue, writes, “The Inupiat use the Ilitqusiat value system that is strongly embedded in the concept of mind, body, spirit, and the environment for mental health promotion and alcohol and drug prevention” (p. xx). The Iñupiat Ilitqusiat is a powerful healing mechanism. We Iñupiat have a responsibility to learn and live our Iñupiaq values, and we must pass these Native values onto our children.

Dr. Hensley states, “Iñupiat Ilitqusiat must not be allowed to fade” (2009, p. 223). The Pavva Dancers and other Iñupiat feel strongly about our Iñupiaq values and will continue to talk about our cultural heritage long after my dissertation is published. We have a responsibility to learn our Iñupiaq values, and pass them to our cultural values to our children so that they remain vibrant.

Not only are the youth turning to unhealthy lifestyles, but also the role of Elders as educators has changed with the introduction to the Western way of life. Okakok (1989), an Iñupiaq scholar, writes, “The purpose of these long storytelling sessions [from Elders]— that of passing down values and other important elements of our culture — is severely restricted” (p. 407). It is the group’s hope that traditional dancing provides a culturally healthy recreation, as well as having an avenue to share our Iñupiaq cultural heritage. I hope that my Katimarugut methodology may also provide an avenue to engage storytelling and cultural listening.

Methods

Participants involved in my research were members of the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers, other Iñupiat who are non-members, and families with an Iñupiaq child living in the household. Typically, a

Katimarugut was scheduled and advertised through announcements via the dance group message board, flyers posted on and off campus, social media, electronic mail, and word of mouth. I provided food for every *Katimarugut*, because many of the meetings took place during the early evenings right after the workday. Participants who were new to the discussions were given an Informed Consent Form. I would go through the Informed Consent Form (ICF) with each individual confirming the participant understood everything. The ICF has a place for pseudonyms to be used if they chose be identified, and all participants chose their Iñupiaq names. We talked about one value during a *Katimarugut*, and meetings lasted between 45 minutes to over an hour. Hence, we had 17 group meetings discussing each of our 17 Iñupiat Ilitqusiats (Iñupiaq Values). I transcribed the conversations, transcripts were returned to participants for any changes, excerpts were extracted by the participant and me, and drafts of what was written were sent to all participants for review. All participants had the opportunity to add or delete anything they shared throughout the whole process. No participant opted to have any changes made. Some meetings were longer than others, and some participants shared extensively. The participants and I did not want to take their rich quotes out of context, so some of them were quite lengthy.

Kovach (2009) writes:

Research carried out through Indigenous methodologies, of necessity, requires individuals who are in a position to evaluate both the framework and subsequent findings according to specific procedural guidelines and protocols...Clearly, more scholarship based on Indigenous research frameworks is needed. This will ensure that Indigenous research practice, method, findings, and meanings will be judged as credible according to tribal epistemologies. (p. 133)

When we have *Katimarugut*, we are conducting research firstly for our own benefit. Though I am writing about our findings as my dissertation and having a Western institution evaluate it for a degree program, I must also keep in mind that the dissertation needs to meet the cultural criteria of the Iñupiat people. This Iñupiaq methodology needs to be shared with other Indigenous researchers and be included with other Indigenous frameworks.

I ask myself, “What kind of questions can an Iñupiaq methodology address? How can an Iñupiaq methodology contribute to Indigenous research? Why is an Iñupiaq methodology so important?” My research takes a deeper look at our Iñupiaq values from an Iñupiat perspective. I have introduced an Iñupiaq method and methodology. The storytellers have been established. I have shared why our Elders and community feel it is important for our well being to explore our cultural values and heritage.

I recorded and transcribed the audio recordings from each *Katimarugut*. All transcriptions were distributed to all participants in order to give them an opportunity to proofread for accuracy and to allow statements to be omitted or expanded. Our Iñupiaq way of analyzing what we know about the world relies on relationships through storytelling and experiences. After the completion of a section for each Iñupiat Ilitqusiats, the written draft was distributed to the participants to

verify that everything was accurate and reflected the individual and group's inner views of each Iñupiaq value.

I am at a stage in my life where I am provided with an incredible opportunity. I am an Iñupiaq researcher, conducting research with other Iñupiat, and doing it in an Iñupiaq way that is congruent with the ways in which our ancestors engaged the world and each other.

Katimarugut (We Are Meeting) observations

Looking at our Iñupiat Ilitqusiatic individually may seem compartmentalized or even unlike many other Indigenous methodologies, but in our meetings we recognize the interrelatedness and interconnectedness that our values have with each other. Participants talk about how Humor relates to Sharing, Respect for Others, Respect for Elders, Love for Children, and so forth. MacLean (1988) writes, "Values remain constant but means of achieving them change" (p. 13). Even though our contemporary Iñupiaq lifestyle has drastically changed compared to our ancestors, our Iñupiaq values define who we are and will remain the same for generations.

Schaeffer, an Iñupiaq leader from Kotzebue, states:

Inupiaq Ilitqusiatic draws up a nearly definitive agenda for the forthcoming trial of Inupiaq identity, for it is clear that a form of civilization is in suspense about its own survival and even its right to survive. Somehow that survival depends on our ability to restore our traditional values and take on our responsibilities to ourselves and to others. (Schaeffer & Christensen, 2010, pp. 71-72)

It is important to continue talking, living, and sharing our Iñupiaq values. With our Katimarugut, our discussions help us explore more about who we are.

Dr. Hensley (2009) writes:

To me, the beauty of what became known as Iñupiat Ilitqusiatic -Iñupiat Values-was the fact that they were not material. They were deeply entrenched in the mind and heart and spirit, and entirely transportable. You can be anywhere in the world and retain your Iñupiaq identity and values. (p. 220)

We are Iñupiat wherever we live. If we consciously remember our Elders guidance about our values, we will survive.

In order to better understand our Iñupiat Ilitqusiatic, we need to document our stories, experiences, and legends, listening to the views of each Iñupiaq value. The participants involved are contemporary Iñupiat people. However, we are using a methodology that our ancestors used to address their concerns. Each person shared a perspective or inner view of an Iñupiaq cultural value. These combined experiences provide an understanding a whole story put forth by *Katimarugut*.

I appreciate the scholarly work from my Indigenous predecessors, like Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley, Margaret Kovach, and my graduate committee, as well as other Indigenous scholars.

Through their work, I realize that I have multiple audiences that my dissertation must address. Kovach shares:

For Indigenous researchers, there are often three audiences with whom we engage for transferring the knowledge of our research: (a) findings from Indigenous research must make sense to the general Indigenous community, (b) schema for arriving at our findings must be clearly articulated to the non-Indigenous academy, and (c) both the means for arriving at the findings and the findings themselves must resonate with other Indigenous researchers who are in the best position to evaluate our research. (2009, pp. 133-134)

When I write about the findings from our Katimarugut, I must keep these three audiences in the forefront of my mind. My first audience is the Iñupiat people, so I promise to explain academic jargon and terms in my findings. I hope to articulate an Iñupiaq way of knowing to non-Iñupiat. I hope that my Iñupiaq methodology helps other Indigenous researchers with their ways of conducting research.

I try to use the words “we” and “our” in this Iñupiaq methodology. Since this research is community-driven, the Pavva Iñupiaq Dancers and other Iñupiat are encouraging to continue to talk about our Iñupiat Ilitqusiat, the research and its findings should also be in stewardship with the participants. That includes the way our Katimarugut is connected to how we conduct our research.

One of the strengths about Katimarugut is that it draws upon an Iñupiaq methodology to document an Iñupiaq way of knowing. To my knowledge, there is nothing written about any Iñupiaq methodology. Much has been written about Indigenous methodologies, but I was not able to find anything about an Iñupiaq methodology. This may help other Alaska Native researchers to adapt this methodology to the cultural group they are working with. Each cultural group has their own cultural protocols on how they discuss issues, even among the different Iñupiat communities. Other researchers may be able to practice the same methods and methodology for their own research, but they will not get the same data as mine. When conducting research with group interviews, I was able to get a lot of qualitative data through interaction with a group of people elaborating on one Iñupiaq value for that particular moment. If I were to ask the same research questions even with the same group of people but ten years from now, I can imagine that I would get similar and different qualitative data. Christopher Lalonde writes about cultural resilience in Aboriginal communities: “When communities succeed in promoting their cultural heritage and in securing control of their own collective future—in claiming ownership over their past and future—the positive effects reverberate across many measures of youth health and well-being” (Flynn et al., 2006, p. 67). Even with the possibility of varied results, this methodology a strength, validating that each cultural group is unique and defines themselves in their own way. Just like in the Qayaq story in the beginning of this section, magical things happen when we work together.

Conclusion (Maureen and Sean)

Indigenous methodologies are about learning values that bring about a change of consciousness – this comes out in Kawagley’s discussion of *Ella* – which is weather, land or environment *plus* consciousness, and Meyer’s discussion of *aloha*, or the epistemology of love. “We are a very aware people,” Kawagley writes. “Go for the higher frequency,” Meyer implores. How do we know when our students have a shift of consciousness? To understand that different knowledge systems exist? One thing I know is that it does not happen overnight, and so needs to be reinforced in other classes and with/through graduate committee members. But Maureen will continue to teach Indigenous methodologies along with the mainstream ones. All of our minds have been colonized by Western science, social science and philosophy. Teaching Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies are critical not only for research, but also for just living and working in Alaska, and for developing positive relationships with Alaska Native students, families and communities because the goal is *understanding* rather than Justifiable True Belief.

Sean, a doctoral student in 603, developed his own Iñupiaq methodology, *Katimaragut*, for his mini-research project, and then a fleshed out one in his dissertation. It is based on Iñupiaq cultural values and a set of protocols that he and his participants developed together through regular meetings and interviews. It is a methodology that is culturally and intellectually honest, and consistent with their epistemology, ontology, and axiology. He uses it in his doctoral work to find out how participants feel about each Iñupiaq value, how they learned about it, and how they can pass it down to the next generation.

Maureen was pleased that she could provide a space for Sean to explore and create his own methodology, but it was he, alone, who deeply examined his culture’s epistemology, ontology and axiology and had a change of consciousness about what research was possible—enough so that he knew he had to build his own Iñupiaq methodology for his own people.

Taken together, we hope our work will add to the growing strategies for decolonizing and “talking back” to the academy, and to introduce a new epistemology, indeed, a new consciousness where relationality, harmony and spirituality combined with local cultural values constitute a viable, culturally appropriate methodology. We also hope it will inspire other Indigenous methodologies, and that they will have a prominent place in all research methods discussions, written texts and methodology handbooks. Further areas of study and research could include developing and sharing new kinds of Indigenous methodologies as well as, perhaps, Indigenous ways for data analysis.

For Indigenous researchers, Sean has provided an example of an authentic Iñupiaq dissertation. His research is *by, for, and about* the Iñupiat. His Iñupiaq methodology is based on the Iñupiat Ilitqusiatic (Iñupiaq values), and illustrates a holistic and truly meaningful way of doing research, and is the first of its kind in Alaska. He writes:

Participants are asking for more *Katimaragut* for other Iñupiaq values from the North Slope, Seward Peninsula, and inland Iñupiat. After my research data collection was finished, my youngest son (he was nine-years-old at the time) even

asked, “When is the next Katimarugut?” This reassures me that we need to continue meeting and deepen our understanding of cultural values.

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