


An Anishinaabe Research Methodology that Utilizes Indigenous Intelligence as a Conceptual Framework Exploring Humanity's Relationship to N'bi (Water)

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Abstract

This article presents the utilization of an Anishinaabek Research Paradigm (ARP) that employs Indigenous Intelligence as a conceptual framework for qualitative Anishinaabek analysis of data. The main objective of the research project examines critical insights into Anishinaabek's relationships to N'bi (water), N'bi governance, reconciliation, Anishinaabek law, and Nokomis Giizis with predominately Anishinaabek kweok, grassroots peoples, mishoomsinaanik (grandfathers), gookmisaanik (grandmothers), and traditional knowledge holders. Drawing on Anishinaabek protocols, the enlistment of participants moved beyond the University requirements for ethics. This also includes “standing with” the participants in the act of inquiry, in knowledge, and continued relationships. The ARP for research emerged from Indigenous ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and being. This approach did not call for an integration of two knowledge systems but rather recognizes there are multiple ways of gathering knowledge. The article explains how “meaning-making” involves Indigenous Intelligence through Anishinaabek protocols holding the researcher accountable to the participants, the lands, the ancestors, and to those yet to come.

Keywords

ethical inquiry, action research, qualitative evaluation, social justice, mixed methods, methods in qualitative inquiry, community-based research

Indigenous research holds the potential to regenerate and revitalize the life of Indigenous peoples and communities along with the “knowing” that sustains their ongoing vitality (Johnston et al., 2018, pg. 2).

Introduction

My research is driven by my need to be a good ancestor. I seek to explore the Anishinaabek¹ ways of knowing and being, specific to the Great Lakes territory.² I have listened to Indigenous Elders for the last 30 years often discussing the importance of making decisions for future generations as a responsibility. Dumont (2006) explains that the future generations are already looking back toward us with the awareness that our decisions and our actions are impacting them. My research is also driven by land-based research from which Anishinaabek knowledge stems from. Tobias and

Richmond (2014) explain how Anishinaabek teachings “illustrate a deep-seated attachment to land...they are the central feature upon which Indigenous people globally have developed strong cultural identities, transferred knowledge between generations” (p. 28). G'giikendaaswinmin (our knowledge) originates from different sources such as the lands, the Creator, ceremonies, and Elders which are “embedded in Place-experiences as the places we come from and call home, the places we care for and struggle over, the places that sustain us, the places we share” (McGregor, 2018a, p. 14). Land-based

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research ensures I am accountable to the lands, my ancestors, and the participants, and Anishinaabek protocols. [Datta, 2019](#) explains “Land-based research inspires the transformation of research and researcher, as the researcher accepts responsibility for participants...[t]raditional protocols” (p. 2).

My primary research objective is to explore humanity’s relationship to N’bi (water) and how improving this relation can support well-being for N’bi, other beings and humanity. My goal is to understand N’bi governance and Kweok³; reconciliation and relationships to N’bi; and Anishinaabek naakingewin (law) based on Nokomis Giizis⁴ (Grandmother Moon). As the research is mostly with Anishinaabek kweok from the Great Lakes territory, it is appropriate to utilize an Indigenous centered research approach. I utilize the Indigenous centered research to promote research that prioritizes the aspirations, needs, and values of Indigenous peoples and knowledge ([Johnston et al., 2018](#)). This research is a critical study that centers Anishinaabek kweok g’giikendasswinmin. It is firmly grounded in an Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP) utilizing Indigenous methods and avoiding the study “of” and “on” people and communities.

I do not simply study Indigenous peoples, I am “them.” I live with them, have conversations with them, I participate daily in social, cultural, and governance events, and I stand with them. [TallBear \(2014\)](#) refers to this lived reality as “stand with” and “studying across.” It is more than capacity building or giving back, it is the willingness to remain with “them” in the act of inquiry, in knowledge, and in continued relationships. Standing with the participants addresses power imbalance in research relationships. It is a known fact that imbalanced power relationships between researchers and Indigenous Peoples have been extractive, unethical, and often build academic careers without benefits to the Indigenous Peoples or communities ([Juutilainen et al., 2019](#)). I therefore employ an Indigenous Research Paradigm (IRP) that furthers relationship building to relationship-maintenance. Specifically, I employ an Anishinaabek Research Paradigm (ARP) ensuring I am following Anishinaabek protocols to stand with the knowledge relationships. Maintaining the relationships ensures I am part of the research existing in what I am trying to understand by studying across. Research is about relationships with ourselves, others, the lands, spirit, and ideas ([Breen et al., 2019](#)). [Strega and Brown \(2015\)](#) state, “reflexivity – a recognition that the researcher is not separate from but exists in relationship with what s/he is trying to understand – [i]s a core component of ethical research practice” (p. 8). The framework of my Indigenous inquiry engages a wholistic paradigm drawing on spirit, heart (emotional), the mental, and the physical. [Freeman and Van Katwyk \(2019\)](#) explain that knowledge does not flow exclusively or primarily through our intellect and by trusting ourselves on the interconnectedness of the spiritual, heart (emotional), mental, and physical, we can deepen our experience of knowledge.

In keeping with deepening my experience with knowledge, remaining part of my research, and standing with those in my research, I employ Jim Dumont’s Indigenous Intelligence as a

conceptual framework for my ARP to bisindaage (to listen to someone; spirit), ozhibii’igi (write things down; emotional), nanaagadawendam (I consider, notice, think, reflect, realize; mind), and nisidotaagwad (it is understood; physical). [Dumont’s \(2006\)](#) Indigenous Intelligence involves utilizing all of our being to understand the world around us including the star world, the winged ones (e.g., birds), the ones that swim (e.g., fish), the ones that crawl (e.g., ants), and the four legged (e.g., wolves). The use of the intelligence of the mind, the heart, the body, and the spirit is a unique way of seeing, relating, thinking, and being. [Dumont \(2006\)](#) explains the Indigenous Way of Being is a way of doing that involves the whole person with total response with the total environment; the Indigenous Way of Seeing is a total way of seeing being informed by all senses always drawing on spirit; the Indigenous Way of Relating is inclusive of all life, human and other-than-human; the Indigenous Way of Thinking is total faculty learning inspired from the heart and generated from the mind. Employing Indigenous Intelligence moves beyond decolonizing research methodologies to focusing on Indigenizing how research is conducted.

Indigenizing methodologies never loses sight on the prior step of decolonizing as [Linda Smith \(2012\)](#) describes research as recognizing and responding to the historically exclusive and dominant story that emerged from western research. With the arrival of the settlers and the introduction of colonization, Indigenous Peoples have endured land, language, and cultural loss. The introduction of Canadian policies was designed to destroy Indigenous Peoples by disrupting their structures and assimilating them into mainstream culture. Included in the genocidal tendencies of the settlers was unethical research conducted on Indigenous Peoples. Most of the manipulative and experimental research has damaged relationships between Indigenous Peoples and researchers ([Chiblow, 2020](#); [Mosby, 2013](#)). Ethical standards began to change with the introduction of the Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) in 1998 after the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples ([RCAP, 1996](#)) stated that Indigenous Peoples have to be consulted on what information is gathered, who gathers the information, who maintains the information, and who can have access to it ([Peltier et al., 2020](#); [Steffler, 2016](#)). Further to OCAP and the RCAP, the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS2): Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans developed Chapter 9 as a framework for ethical conduct involving research on Indigenous Peoples ([Government of Canada, 2018](#)). I further these statements, policies, and documents and move to another level of Indigenizing research to firmly ground my methodology in an Indigenous Research Paradigm using Indigenous methodologies and methods for gathering knowledge ([Christian, 2019](#); [Kovach, 2009](#); [Wilson, 2008](#)). Utilizing an Anishinaabek distinct Indigenous Intelligence Framework aims to serve the interests of the participants of the research honoring respect, reciprocity, relationality, responsibility, relevancy, and reflection ([Chiblow, 2020](#)). The Indigenous Intelligence Framework embraces [Shawn Wilson’s \(2008\)](#) understanding of Research as Ceremony by

engaging in research with the intent of restoring harmony and balance to relationships between Anishinaabek kweok, N'bi, Anishinaabek law, and Nokomis Giizis.

The main objective of the research project I am drawing on was to examine critical insights, acquired from language speakers, Anishinaabek kweok, mishoomsinaanik (grandfathers), gookmisnaanik (grandmothers) on Anishinaabek's relationship to the N'bi, N'bi governance, reconciliation, Anishinaabek law, and Nokomis Giizis. Participants of this research were involved on a voluntary basis and, while they primarily are members of First Nation communities from the Great Lakes territory, they were invited to participate in the research as women who are highly focused on N'bi activism, N'bi art, Mother Earth Water Walks, reconciliation, Anishinaabek law, and ceremonies to advocate and educate for the healing of our people, the healing of our lands, and for responsibility-based governance. These participants are only a few of the kweok who are leaders responding to the degradation of N'bi in the Great Lakes territory. These are the resilient kweok who are resisting colonization, patriarchy, white supremacy, missionization, assimilation, and capitalism as they return to Anishinaabek ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and being. They understand that our actions today, by being good ancestors, will be remembered and honored by those yet to come.

Positionality and Background

The intent of positionality statements is to promote transparency while acknowledging beliefs and cultural background of the researcher, which impacts how the researchers conduct themselves (Forbes et al., 2020). Within postpositivist and constructivist/interpretivist paradigms, researchers locate themselves to identify potential biases (Lavalee, 2009). Within many Indigenous communities, we identify ourselves as a form of respect in sharing who we are, where we are from, and who are our ancestors. This articulation helps establish trust (Absolon & Willett, 2005) by locating ourselves in relation to community and distinguishes our research from the many historical research projects which have had negative impacts on Indigenous Peoples and their communities (McGregor, 2018b). As an Anishinaabe kwe, behaving respectfully is integral to holding myself accountable to the lands, the knowledge shared, my ancestors, and those yet to come. Johnston and Musayett (2018) rationalizes that any potential unethical practices risk not only our own reputations but those of our families and communities which could cause relationships to rupture. The ARP I employ is distinct to Anishinaabek; it is much more rigorous than what was being asked of me from the University ethical research process. One component of transparency and accountable ethnicity is embedded within my understanding of my expected responsibility to ensure a long healthy life for Mother Earth. I understand I am part of Creation with specific roles and responsibilities stemming from my name and clan. I therefore respect my teachings of

spirit comes first by making an offering (the offering was given to N'bi) and introducing myself in Anishinaabemowin.

Aniin, Nanaboozhoo, XXXX. Ogamah annag indigo. Aji-jaak nidoodem. Ketegaunzeebee nidoonjibaa. Anishinaabe kwe indow. Ketegaunzeebee nindaa noogom. I grew up at Bell's Point on the most westerly side of Garden River First Nation with access to the St. Mary's River and the Root River.⁵ N'bi has always been important and influential in my life. I would often watch the rivers, listening to the sounds, feeling the connection. Craft (2014) states, "[W]ater is an important source of healing ... during times of difficulty is the time to get healing from the water" (p. 29). I could feel the sounds of N'bi, understanding that N'bi is "sacred" and is a "powerful medicine" with "life giving properties" (Anderson, 2010; Chiblow, 2019; LaDuke, 2005; McGregor, 2012). I have furthered my understanding of N'bi by participating in N'bi ceremonies, Water Walks, and discussing N'bi issues with Elders and language speakers.

I live in my Anishinaabek ancestors' territory of the Great Lakes which informs my N'bi-based research. My community is the Anishinaabek of the Great Lakes and includes kweok. It has been well documented that far too often women voices are missing from governance decision making due to the violence perpetuated by colonization (Chiblow, 2020; Kuokkanen, 2019; Lawrence & Anderson, 2005; St Denis, 2017). Participating in N'bi ceremonies and Water Walks has provided me with many opportunities to learn from other Anishinaabek kweok. With kweok being birth water carriers, their knowledge is intrinsic to research on N'bi governance. I utilized their knowledge in exploring kweok relationships to N'bi and how these relationships can inform N'bi governance.

It has taken many years of persuading from family, friends, and colleagues to pursue a doctorate. I did not like educational institutions due to numerous racist experiences faced in elementary school, high school, college, and universities. I was often asked to leave history, geography, social sciences, and science classes. I was labeled as disruptive because I would not tolerate inaccurate descriptions and information about Indigenous Peoples. Many non-Indigenous students feared me just because I spoke up as an Anishinaabe kwe, leaving me feeling isolated and misunderstood. Hushed but audible racist remarks flowed consistently in the hallways and classrooms and in private conversations which too often included the teachers. Following the instructions of my ancestors, I participated in ceremony asking for guidance. The guidance that came was to be who I need to be, to be a good ancestor. Being a good ancestor has driven my personal quest to inform the world one person at a time of the immediate need to stop the destruction to the land, the waters, the air, and the sky world so that those who are yet to come will have all Creation to experience this journey in the human form.

With my experiences as an Anishinaabe kwe with N'bi, I chose my over-arching focus to be on N'bi and kweok. More specifically, I chose to explore reconciliation and relationships to N'bi as one of my primary topics when Canada released the Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of

Canada in 2105. This report documents what the Commission did and how it went about its work, as well as what it heard, read, and concluded about residential schools in Canada (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The report documents 95 Calls to Action categorized in several different themes such as child language and culture (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The Calls to Action are not specific to kweok nor do they refer to relationships to the waters and lands. One year later, the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) began, releasing its final report in 2019 which included 2SLGBTQIA people. This final report has several themes listing well over 18 Calls for Justice. The Calls for Justice address human and Indigenous rights and governmental obligations; culture; health and wellness; human security; and justice to list a few (Government of Canada, 2019). Although the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada and the National Inquiry into MMIWG have commendable Calls to Action and Calls to Justice, relationships to the waters and lands are not detailed. Exploring reconciliation and relationships can assist with understanding how Anishinaabek naakngewin in relationship to Nokomis Giizis can support the well-being for N'bi, other beings and humanity.

As an Anishinaabe person, I understand that Anishinaabek naakngewin is based on relationships and responsibilities. Craft (2018) states, "Anishinaabe inaacongwiwin is structured relationally, primarily in a realm of responsibilities (rather than the binary of rights and obligations)" (p. 56). Anishinaabek law has different layers of law. One-layer, Natural law explains the natural realm such as Nokomis Giizis phases and cycles as guiding human behavior (Copenace, 2018). I therefore want to explore Anishinaabek naakngewin based on relationships and responsibilities from Nokomis Giizis.

Throughout this research, I predominately worked with Anishinaabek kweok, grassroots peoples, mishoomsinaanik (grandfathers) gookmisinaanik (grandmothers), and traditional knowledge holders. As part of my commitment to minobimaadziwin, I relied on Anishinaabek ceremony throughout this learning journey. I frequently participated in several different ceremonies and continuously offered my asema⁶ (tobacco) as spirit always comes first for Anishinaabek. Adhering to Anishinaabek protocols woven through my research ensures I remain true to my Ancestors. The methodology I employ in this research allows me to be truly accountable to myself and to attempt to always think the highest thoughts (Davidson, 2019). Anishinaabek teachings explain how humans are accountable for our actions to all our relations. Peltier et al. (2020) explains that Indigenous ceremony is critical when conducting research "in a good way" (p. 5). In being accountable to Anishinaabek, all my relations, and myself, I rely on Jim Dumont's "Indigenous Intelligence" of embracing the total breadth and depth of our way of seeing, relating, thinking, and being as my ARP, always avoiding historical and contemporary colonial research.

Research as a Colonial Tool

A plethora of scholarly articles explain the atrocities of unethical research on Indigenous Peoples as detrimental, being done without their consent, used to perpetuate control over or disempower Indigenous Peoples, and being research on rather than with or for (Chiblow, 2020; Forbes et al., 2019; Freeman & Van Katwyk, 2019; Haitana et al., 2020; Johnston et al., 2018; Lambert, 2014; Martin, 2003; Peltier et al., 2020; Reid, 2020; Starblanket et al., 2019; Strega & Brown, 2015; Smith, 2012). The research has led to mistrust as Indigenous Peoples are over-researched most often with little involvement in the design, purpose, or outcome of the studies. Karen Martin (2003) states, "[W]e are over-researched and this has generated mistrust, animosity and resistance from many Aboriginal people" (p. 203). Colonization has had devastating effects on Indigenous Peoples. It created processes reliant upon knowledge created about rather than with and for Indigenous Peoples (Peltier et al., 2020). This type of research has not led to improvements in Anishinaabek communities (McGregor, 2018b) nor has it conveyed their worldview as understood and told by them in their stories or language. Fortunately, for new scholars like myself, there is now a wealth of books and articles by Indigenous scholars who have paved the way for decolonizing research.

Decolonizing Research

Colonization was (and still is) not only physical exploitation and subjugation of Indigenous Peoples but was/is also the exploitation and subjugation of our knowledges (Geniusz, 2009). Scholars such as Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) have gained recognition by pointing out the differences in western methodologies and Indigenous methodologies. This work set the stage for the acknowledgment of Indigenous research methodologies as being unique and valid.

Decolonizing research calls for research designs to emerge from Indigenous ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and being. It is about breaking away from dominant European colonial ideas and institutions (Smith, 2012). Decolonizing research is understanding the importance of knowing Indigenous traditions, to act from those traditions, and to live from them. It is just as important to understand the cultural diversity of Indigenous communities and the importance of language. We are not all the same. We have different protocols, languages, and different Creation stories. McGregor (2018b) states, "Our differences may be a result of ideology, values, attitudes, lifestyles, gender, age, and social class" (p. 132). Understanding the cultural diversity of Indigenous communities, includes understanding that for Anishinaabek,⁷ teachers include non-human forms such as animals, trees, rocks, the sky realm (McGregor & Plain, 2014). As part of my research, I followed the Anishinaabek protocol of offering asema specific to an Anishinaabek Research Paradigm (ARP).

Anishinaabe Research Paradigm

Several policies and standards such as OCAP® (Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession) and TCPS2 Chapter 9: Research Involving the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples of Canada, guide researchers when conducting research with Indigenous Peoples.

As Anishinaabek, we did not RE-search but rather lived our lives seeing, relating, knowing, and being from g'giikendaaswinmin. We learned from other “intelligences” such as the animals, plants, waters, and sky realm (Kimmerer, 2013). Our identity as Anishinaabek is grounded in relationships with the lands, our ancestors who have returned to the lands, and with future generations who will come into being on the lands (Wilson, 2008). We are in relationship with g'giikendaaswinmin continuously seeing, relating, knowing, and being. Debassige (2013) explains that giikendaaswin “encompasses a process of gathering, accumulating, carrying, and using knowledge, information, and sacred items for various purposes in life” (p. 6). Indigenous Peoples have distinctive languages that transmit their knowledge systems, ways of seeing, relating, knowing and being (Archibald et al., 2019; Chiblow, 2020; Kovach, 2009; Lambert, 2014). My ARP draws from g'giikendaaswinmin ways of seeing, relating, knowing, and being. These include adhering to Anishinaabek culturally specific protocols throughout the research as Indigenous knowledge and cultural protocols are not monolithic although many underlying principles are consistent such as spirit comes first.

In the Anishinaabe culture, spirit comes first in all things that we do. Geniusz (2009) explains, “[P]rotocols of izhitiwaawin (Anishinaabe culture, teachings, customs, history) dictate we must make an offering...when asking assistance of another being” (p. 55). In following izhitiwaawin, I offered asema expressing gratitude and asking for guidance as I journey on this endeavor. Indigenous philosophies, ontologies, and epistemologies adhere to the reciprocal duties and responsibilities between humans and the rest of the world (McGregor et al. 2020). Embedded within Indigenous cultures and values are responsibility, respect, reciprocity, relationality, and reflection (Archibald, 2008; Bell, 2013; Debassige, 2010; Kimmerer, 2013; Sinclair, 2013). When conducting research in Indigenous communities, Indigenous scholars have added relevance and refusal to the R's (Chiblow, 2020; Kirkness, & Barnhardt, 2001; Johnston et al. 2018). Enacting the R's is a component of my ARP entrenched in Anishinaabek cultural protocols.

The Five-Pointed Star

I was sitting out in the crisp winter night watching the stars, marveling at their beauty, respecting the comfort they provide. I was looking for Ojjiig (Fisher) to see if he had anything to say on this crisp, cold night. A vision of the five-pointed star appeared. I made an offering to him in reciprocity for showing

me the star. My relationship with Ojjiig is fairly new as I have been recently inquiring more about the star world. I have always felt a connection with the night skies, feeling the comfort of the blanket they provide. I reflected about that star and understanding the responsibility that comes with kendaaswin. It appeared that g'giikendaaswinmin is surrounded by responsibility, respect, reciprocity, relationality, and reflection—the five-pointed star. Research is about seeing, relating, knowing and being with g'giikendaaswinmin. I understood more what research meant and how the 5 Rs are integral with searching for g'giikendaaswinmin (Figure 1).

G'giikendaaswinmin is considered a gift with responsibility. DuPre (2019) states, “The ability to learn, nurture, and mobilize our knowledge is a responsibility and beautiful gift from Creator” (pg. 98). Reciprocity is an Anishinaabek protocol for acquiring g'giikendaaswinmin. Respecting Anishinaabek is understanding g'giikendaaswinmin comes from many different sources. Cormier & Ray (2018) explains “[K]nowledge in the form of stories, dreams, and ceremonies describe Anishinaabe ways of learning” (p. 118). Respect is demonstrated by the conduct and behavior in one's relationship with and in community (Manitowabi & Maar, 2018). The respect for g'giikendaaswinmin shared plays a role in Anishinaabek research. Relationality is the relationships that we hold and are a part of (Wilson, 2008). We are in relationships with g'giikendaaswinmin. Dumont (2006) explains how the world was created and it consists of relationships stating, “Respect is understood as the honoring of the harmonious interconnectedness of all of life, which is a relationship that is reciprocal.” (p. 17). Reflecting is how we see, relate, know, and be. My reflection on what Ojjiig showed me was pivotal in understanding the interconnectedness and interdependence of the 5 Rs. Like many scholars, I utilized the teachings of respect, responsibility, relationality, reciprocity, and reflection in my Anishinaabek research paradigm.

This gift of the five-pointed star is not mine I am only a carrier of it. It is my responsibility to share the gift as many others may be able to add their interpretations, their kendaaswin. The reciprocity for this gift from Ojjiig is an Anishinaabek protocol. Protocols vary in Indigenous communities. Being in relationships with Indigenous peoples means understanding their specific protocols and living those protocols.

Turtle Island has numerous Indigenous communities with their own specific protocols. Kwaymullina (2017) explains the term Indigenous is a term created by colonialism which obscures the vast diversity of Indigenous Peoples suggesting a single homogenous culture which does not exist. The diversity of Indigenous Peoples is inclusive of their protocols. Martin (2003), who is a Quandamooka woman in Australia, explains research in her territory must draw on Quandamooka ontology specific to her and her Peoples. An IRP place specific with protocols to the ancestors, customs, traditions, beliefs, and knowledges of the place. Designing research approaches for all Indigenous populations is

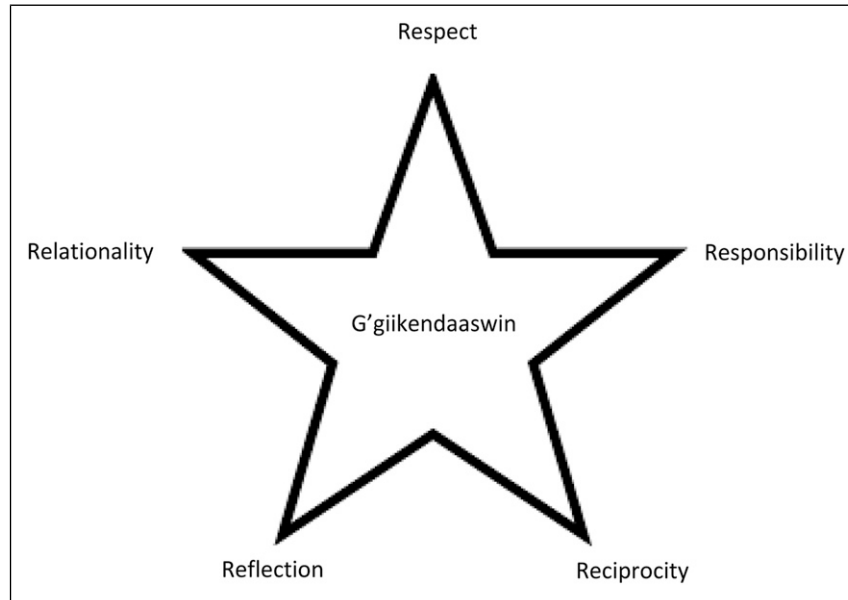


Figure 1. Five-pointed star representing g'giikendaaswinmin surrounded by the 5 Rs.

challenging “because of cultural, linguistic, historical, and geographical heterogeneity among and within Indigenous communities” (McGregor, 2018b, p. 132). Of course, there are many overarching principles such as

- (1). Research must recognize our worldview, knowledges, and realities as distinctive and legitimate.
- (2). Research must reflect the Peoples’ goals, aspirations, and needs.
- (3). Relationships between researcher and participants must be based on mutual respect and maintained.
- (4). Indigenous Peoples approve the research and research methods.
- (5). Research participants must feel safe and be safe.
- (6). Indigenous methods are legitimate ways of sharing knowledge.

(Kovach, 2015; McGregor, 2018b; Wilson, 2008). These principles are only a few common to Indigenous communities. Ultimately, “there must be a deep, abiding respect for Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous experiences” (Kovach, 2015, pg. 57) which are land-based. Since knowledge, protocols, and methodology must be place-based, I employ an ARP from the Great Lakes territory with Indigenous Intelligence to gather g'giikendaaswinmin.

G'giikendaaswinmin

Indigenous knowledge systems have been called many things such as Aboriginal Traditional Knowledge (ATK) or Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). Descriptions and definitions have been conjured to help people understand exactly

what Indigenous knowledge systems are, primarily in the English language. It is important to understand that Indigenous knowledge systems differ from western systems and may not fit neatly into the tightly packed colonial boxes typical research adheres to.

First and foremost, g'giikendaaswinmin is considered a gift with responsibilities. McGregor (2014) states, “[I]t is not enough just to know; one has to do something, or act responsibly in relation to the “knowledge” (p. 495). G'giikendaaswinmin is a responsibility toward generations of ancestors, the generations of today, and the generations yet to come. We have scholars such as Wendy Makoons Geniusz and Robin Wall Kimmerer who rationalize that our knowledge is not primitive but is wisdom. Many others have expressed that Indigenous knowledge systems are unique and come from various sources such as dreams, ceremony, the land, the sky world, from all life (Debassige, 2010; Dumont, 1993; LaDuke, 2005; McGregor, 2013; Peltier et al., 2020). G'giikendaaswinmin is not found in a bookstore but is place-based and relational. G'giikendaaswinmin reflects those experiences and observations from living in a place. We learn from the lands we live on. It is a lived knowledge and cannot be separated from human experience and action (Chief et al., 2016). It is based on relationships and responsibilities. McGregor (2014) states, “Anishinaabek knowledge serves as part of the foundation for understanding our responsibilities to all beings in Creation” (p. 495). G'giikendaaswinmin is collective and is not owned individually. G'giikendaaswinmin is relational to all Creation and carrying g'giikendaaswinmin is the responsibility of all generations, past and future. Research is more than just seeking g'giikendaaswinmin; it is the intelligence of the mind, the heart, the spirit, the soul, and the body (Dumont, 2006). It is Indigenous intelligence.

Indigenous Intelligence Framework for Research

My research methodology follows an Indigenous Intelligence framework, as it ties innovative Indigenous research methodologies and western approaches. This approach is not calling for an integration of two knowledge systems but rather recognizes there are multiple ways of gathering knowledge. Alan Corbiere's presentation to the [Chippewas of Rama First Nation \(2015\)](#) explains how the Covenant Chain wampum belt was co-created with Indigenous and English symbols tying together the two different nations' relationship. I have listened to many presentations on wampum belts and the symbols representing the different nations do not interfere with each other but come together bringing each individual knowledge system. [Kovach \(2015\)](#) states, "Indigenous methodologies are not built upon western thought" (p. 57). Indigenous thought connects the spiritual, the physical, the mental, and the heart into one. [Wilson and Hughes \(2019\)](#) in conversation about research explains how being an Indigenist researcher is bringing the whole self to a project as it is more than just an intellectual exercise involving only the mental. I frame Indigenous Intelligence specifically for my Anishinaabek framework.

My research centers Anishinaabek knowledges and ways of seeing, relating, knowing, and being from within Anishinaabek philosophical contexts rather than assimilating the knowledge systems into a Eurocentric worldview. [Juutilainen et al. \(2019\)](#) states, "[R]esearchers need to understand that Indigenous knowledge systems must be valued and respected, not subsumed into Eurocentric academic constructs" (p. 149). I engage in a wholistic paradigm drawing on the emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental participating in relationship with what I am learning. [Wilson \(2019\)](#) explains, "As researchers, we are not separate from the process, but rather participate in relationship with what we are learning" (p. 9). [Mpoeh Johannah Keikelame & Leslie Swartz \(2019\)](#) explain that Linda Tuhiwai-Smith emphasizes that cultural beliefs, values and practices "should be an integral part of Indigenous research methodology and should be explicitly built into the methodology and reflected in a transparent way." (p. 4). This framework is fundamentally about learning and is relationship-based. I understand that my Anishinaabe ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and being direct my research approach, design, implementation, analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of results. I also understand that I need to be wholistic in "meaning-making" using the spirit, the heart, the mind, and the body as well as recognizing the relationships of interconnectedness and interdependence ([Archibald et al., 2019](#); [Dumont, 2006](#)).

In Jim [Dumont's \(2006\)](#) articulation of Indigenous Intelligence, interconnectedness, interdependence, centeredness, multi-faculty responsiveness, consciousness, value-based seeing, relating, knowing, and doing are the core concepts. My understanding of interconnectedness is being connected to the collective whole using individual creativity and innovation

that benefits and advances the collective. But it also refers to the connectedness to all life based on reciprocity, responsiveness, and respect. Interdependence is understanding that we as human beings function from all levels of being—spirit, heart, mind, and body, that are all both independent and simultaneously dependent on each other. Centeredness is being centered within Anishinaabek worldview affirming, asserting, and advancing ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and doing. This multi-faculty responsiveness demands total consciousness at all levels relying on value-based seeing, relating, knowing, and doing. Value-based ways are inclusive of kindness, honesty, sharing, strength, respect, wisdom, and harmony. Exercising the total capacity of one's whole being also indicates responsiveness to future generations. [Dumont \(2006\)](#) states, "Taking intelligent action has to be informed and driven by our Indigenous culture, traditions and our way of life" (p. 26). In understanding the knowledge shared in this project, I engage the spirit, heart, mind, and body as instruments of coding.

Research Process

In this section, I move to providing details on how my specific study was conducted, drawing on the ARP that has been explained above. I demonstrate how Anishinaabek ways of seeing, relating, knowing, and being were integral to the study. I give a rationale for selecting Indigenous Intelligence as the framework for this study and articulate the ways it was implemented. The research methods, including the use of conversations, a focus group, and key informants; development of conversation schedule; participant recruitment, knowledge/data gathering, analysis and approach to coding are recounted to demonstrate how Anishinaabek ways of seeing, relating, knowing, and being were employed throughout the study.

Beyond Ethical Approvals

In 2000, the National Aboriginal Health Organization established ethical principles, referred to as Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP©) ([Loppie, 2007](#)). The OCAP© guides the process of data collection, protection, usage, and sharing in Indigenous communities ([Starblanket et al., 2019](#)). The Tri-Council funding agencies have led academic institutions to implement similar principles in their research ethics guidelines. Adhering to these guidelines, I completed the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans course in research ethics receiving the TCPS 2: CORE certificate for this study.

Moving beyond the University requirements for ethics, I enlisted Anishinaabek protocols. Anishinaabek protocols are embedded in our ways of knowing and being. Conducting research with and in Anishinaabek communities is about who we are, how we know and engage with knowledge, and what we do as researchers ([Breen et al., 2019](#)). As a new academic

researcher, I want to ensure I continue to conduct myself appropriately by following Anishinaabek protocols. My understanding is that living minobimaadziwin means being responsive and responsible to all life. It is continuous in all aspects of living and making offerings is one way to be respectful and responsive. [McGregor \(2018b\)](#) states, “[I]n Anishinaabe communities, offering tobacco, which is considered a sacred medicine, symbolizes an invitation to a reciprocal relationship” (p. 133). The exchange of asema for g’giikendaaswinmin guided me in understanding the importance of g’giikendaaswinmin being shared and kept me centered in Anishinaabek worldview knowingly and intentionally embracing minobimaadziwin.

Research Aim

The aim of this study was to explore humanity’s relationship to N’bi and ways improving this relationship can support the well-being for N’bi, other beings, and all humanity. To address this aim, I formulated the research questions to explore Anishinaabek concepts related to N’bi governance and Anishinaabek kweok, reconciliation and relationships to N’bi, and Anishinaabek law and Nokomis Giizis.

Gathering Methods

In this project, I primarily used conversations grouped into the three themes as the main gathering approach. Initially, the project was to use focus groups but due to COVID-19, I changed the focus groups to key informants. [Starblanket et al. \(2019\)](#) explain that conversations and focus groups for gathering data fall within Indigenous worldviews.

A conversational design was an appropriate method as conversations provide research participants greater control over the knowledge they are sharing ([Kovach, 2009](#)). The project is exploratory based on the research aim (Nathan et al., 2018). This method was easily aligned with Anishinaabek protocols of offering asema maintaining the relationships established with the participants. All types of interviews rely on conducting a more or less directed conversation ([Charmaz, 2014](#)). Directing conversations is not a new concept to Anishinaabek because typically if you wanted to know something, you would ask a question with an offering, which could lead to a conversation. Absolon (2011) utilizes individual conversations in her research as a means to promote equity decolonizing research methodologies ensuring Indigenous voices are elevated. This process was also used with the key informants. Key informants were the kweok from the focus groups that was originally planned but due to COVID-19, focus groups were not an option. In adhering to Anishinaabek protocols, I offered asema and a gift to each participant in exchange for their knowledge along with reading the consent forms. With the public health measures for COVID-19, not all conversations were conducted in person which meant the offering and gift protocols also did not happen in

person. Instead, I made the offering for the participant sharing knowledge before the telephone or Zoom call. Participants chose to sign the forms or give verbal consent both in person and on the telephone or Zoom call.

Participation Through Offerings

The method of recruiting through an offering is embedded in Anishinaabek protocols. When you want to know something, you ask. With the action of asking, an offering is made. I followed Anishinaabek protocols by making an offering to each participant. [Hall et al. \(2015\)](#) states, “In the Anishinaabe worldview, gifting is a gesture of relationship between people” (p. 11). The participants were Anishinaabek kweok, grassroots peoples, mishoomsinaanik (grandfathers), gookmisnaanik (grandmothers), and traditional knowledge holders. The inclusion criteria were participants from the Great Lakes territory who have knowledge relating to the N’bi, N’bi governance, and Nokomis Giizis. Through years of experience working for the Chiefs of Ontario, participating in Water Walks and ceremony, I contacted already known participants sharing information about the research and setting a date and time for the conversation. In some instances, the participants already known to me suggested others I should be speaking with. Initially, the intent was to have focus groups with women’s councils, groups, and commissions. The organizations for the council and women’s commission are based in territory organizations with staff to coordinate their meetings. Due to COVID-19, the staff contacted the kweok with the study information individually so they could decide to participate as key informants rather than in focus groups. COVID-19 measures of staying at home were implemented by conducting the key informant conversations via telephone or ZOOM. Verbal consent was obtained by reading the informed consent form prior to our conversations. Offerings were made to participants and to the lands regardless of how the conversations were conducted. All participants contacted agreed to participate in the study.

Bizindam

Anishinaabek protocols are based on bizindam. Learning to bizindam demonstrates respect and the willingness to learn. [Archibald \(2008\)](#) explains that “Elders say, it is important to listen with three ears: two on the sides of our heads and the one that is in our heart” (p. 8). The aim of this study was to decolonize by utilizing bizindam. [Wagamese \(2016\)](#) states, When you listen, you become aware. That’s for your head. When you hear, you awaken. That’s for your heart. When you feel, it becomes part of you. That’s for your spirit... it’s so you learn to listen with your whole being. That’s how you learn” (p. 113).

Engaging bizindam follows Wendy [Geniusz \(2009\)](#) Biskaabiiyan by participating in decolonization to enable readiness for the knowledge being shared. Bizindam provides for decolonization by listening to hear, not react, it is actively

listening with your entire being. Jutilainen et al. (2019) reiterate that researchers must listen to the participants and respect what is being shared. In active listening, research is reconceptualized and becomes emergent (Potts & Brown, 2015) through bizindam and reflection. I drew on Indigenous theoretical frameworks that emphasize bizindam through responsibilities and relationships. I applied bizindam with all participants as the initial stage of coding.

Qualitative Anishinaabek Analysis

Have you ever watched a butterfly fly? It is not gliding, soaring, or hovering but is an erratic fluttering style. This is how I felt when I encountered coding; I was erratically fluttering trying to understand what I needed to do and how to do it. The task was determining what is valid in terms of western criteria, but which is also compatible with the principles and characteristics of Anishinaabek ways of seeing, relating, knowing and being. I decided to engage in the Anishinaabek teaching that spirit comes first and if you want to know something, then put asema out and ask. This is what I did and how I began to my CODING for the g'giikendaaswinmin shared with me by framing Indigenous Intelligence as foundational and ever present in my coding process. Dumont (2006) explains that Indigenous Intelligence is a unique way of seeing, relating, thinking, and being, located in the four directions. I remembered watching the butterfly, marveling at its beauty and the balance it maintained regardless of erratic fluttering. I drifted back to a time when a butterfly came to see me in a vision focusing on the balance it maintains. I explored the four life stages of the butterfly trying to understand how life as a butterfly must be. It then came to me, that the wings of the butterfly are in four sections and all sections are needed for balance. I pictured each section of the 4 wings with the seeing, the relating, the knowing and the being maintaining true balance. I imagined the butterfly being picked up by a gentle wind and gracefully gliding through the sky world melting into the stars. The image was stunningly beautiful, and it became apparent that I could see bizindaage, ozhibii'igi, naanaagadawendam, and nisidotaagwad. Below I describe bizindaage, ozhibii'igi, naanaagawendam, and nisidotaagwad as Indigenous Intelligence for my method for coding.

Bizindaage, Ozhibii'igi, Naanaagadawendam, Nisidotaagwad

The first phase was bizindaage (I listen to someone). The spirit is at the center of all beings. We are all spirit beings. Dumont (2006) explains being spirit-centered is a total way of seeing informed by all senses. I let myself feel what was being shared. I closed off all sounds to listen, to become spiritually attuned to the knowledge being shared. I imaged what was being said. I listened several times before transcribing verbatim.

My second phase was ozhibii'igi (I wrote things down). It was a way of relating to what was heard. Dumont (2006)

describes the way of relating is respectful of the individual. The ways of relating are captured through heart. The heart defines who we are and is a way of knowing. It is relating. I transcribed verbatim what was being shared allowing myself to stay attuned to the spiritual significance of what was said.

The third phase was nanaagadawendam (I consider, notice, think, reflect, realize). This phase utilized the mind inspired from the heart. It is a way of knowing. Dumont (2006) clarifies that the way of knowing is inspired from the heart as well as generated from the mind's intelligence. It is the way of thinking. I read through the transcripts reflecting on what was shared. I coded each verbatim transcript to find the summary. I found same phrases, thoughts, words, and found differences.

The fourth and final phase nisidotaagwad (it is understood). Dumont (2006) maintains the way of being is the total response of the total person generating creative expression and the highest quality of experience. The way of being is the doing; it becomes the physical (the body) taking action.

The following Figure 2 illustrates the phases on each wing.

During the coding, I felt conflicts between the need to group similar ideas to draw conclusions about the interviewees' thinking and the realization that many important Anishinaabe ideas are so multifaceted that compartmentalizing the data oversimplifies the richness of the ideas. Some of the themes were so interwoven that they could not be neatly fitted into the list of research questions. This reinforced the wholistic perspective of Anishinaabe ways of seeing, relating, knowing, and being. The data gathered in this study were not meant to be tabulated, but rather described, interpreted, and understood. Archibald (2019) refers to this as "meaning-making" which involves the spirit, heart, mind, and body. Making meaning is often thought of as analyzing data. Meaning-making happened continuously throughout the research process. It was constant reflection. Constant reflection included understanding what was shared is participating in relationship with what I was learning. Breen et al. (2019) quotes Adams et al. as stating, "Knowledge can't be "discovered" or "owned" but instead it reveals itself, is experienced, is shared" (p. 9). This research required me to decolonize from dominant Eurocentric ideas focusing on an IRP, more specifically, an Anishinaabek framework. Wilson (2008) indicates that the core of our approaches is a ceremony with relationships. The approach I chose kept me in relationship with the kendaaswin that was shared.

G'giikendaaswinmin is the center of the 5-pointed star containing relationality, respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and reflection. Keno gego naabadosin (everything is connected) to the spirit, heart, mind, and body. Understanding how my way of seeing, relating, thinking, and being connects me to g'giikendaaswinmin is an ARP (Figure 3).

Summary

This article has presented an ARP utilizing Indigenous Intelligence as a conceptual framework for research conducted in the Great Lakes territory. I argue utilizing Indigenous

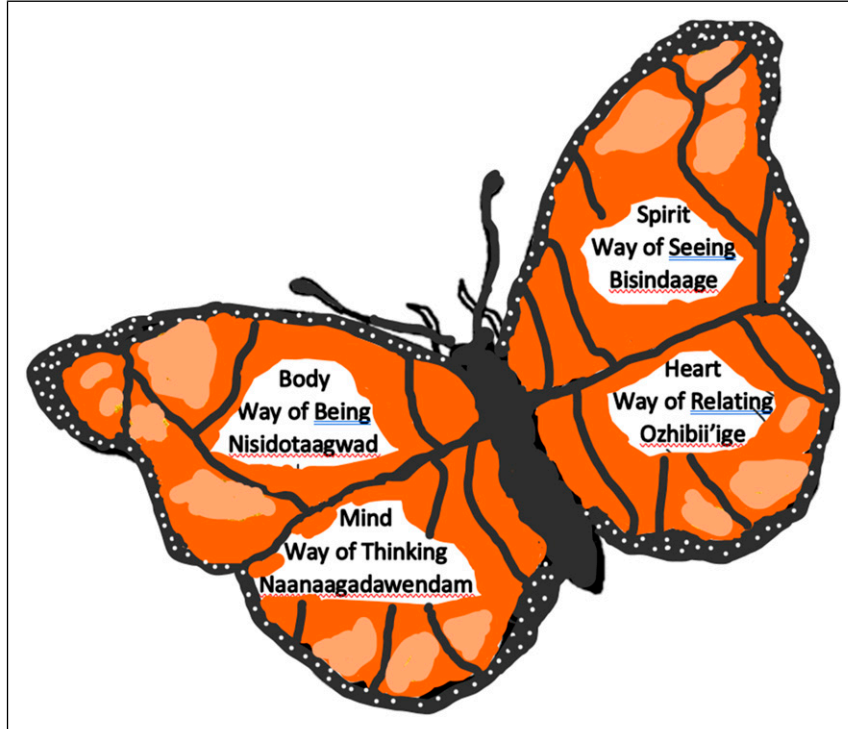


Figure 2. Coding methodology based on Indigenous Intelligence of ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and being. Keno gego naabadosin (everything is connected).

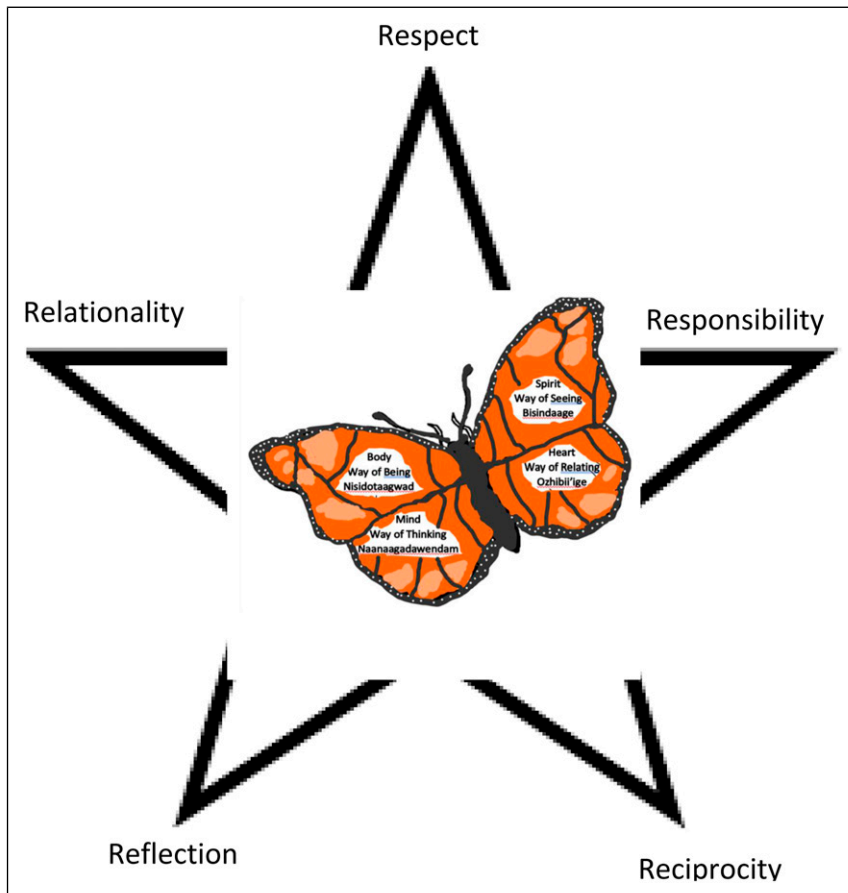


Figure 3. Keno gego naabadosin.

research methodologies promotes “standing with” Indigenous peoples when conducting research as numerous scholarly articles have been written on the atrocities to Indigenous peoples through colonial methodologies. Decolonizing research assists the researchers to see the Eurocentrism in conventional research methods (Bell, 2013). Embracing Indigenous methodologies for research in and with Indigenous communities needs to be the new norm through Indigenous research paradigms.

Decolonizing research by utilizing an ARP fosters my personal decolonization in relation to being a good ancestor.

Appendix

Glossary⁸

Anishinaabek	plural for original peoples
Anishinaabe	singular for original peoples
Asema	tobacco
Aniin, Nanabooxhoo	hello
Nidizhnikaaz	my name
Ogamah annag indigo	Leading Star is my spirit name
Ajjaak nidoodem	I am crane clan
Ketegaunzeebee nidoonjibaa	I live in Garden River
Bizindam	listen with all your being
Biskaabiian	returning to ourselves
N’bi	water includes rivers, lakes steams, etc.
Kweok	women, plural
Kwe	woman, singular
G’giikendaaswinmin	our knowledge—referring to the knowledge of Anishinaabek
Nokomis Giizis	grandmother moon
Anishinaabemowin	Anishinaabek language
Gookmisnaanik	grandfathers, plural
Mishoomsinaanik	grandmothers, plural
Bisindaage	I listen to someone
Ozhibii’igi	I wrote things down
Naanaagadawendam	I consider, notices, thinks, reflects, realizes
Nisidotaagwag	it is understood
Keno geog naabodosin	everything is connected
Ojig	fisher
Minobimaadzwin	the good life
Ishitiwaawin	Anishinaabek culture, customs, teachings, history

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Anishinaabek ways of seeing, relating, thinking, and being contributed to bizindaage, ozhibii’igi, naanaagadawendam, and nisidotaagwad as a qualitative Anishinaabek analysis. The journey of seeing, relating, thinking of the butterfly drifting into the 5-pointed star is part of my search for g’giikendaaswinmin; it is part of my being. Living and being kendaaswin through Anishinaabek protocols holds me accountable to the knowledge shared, the lands, my ancestors, and those yet to come.

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Notes

1. Translation to words is provided in Glossary.
2. The Great Lakes territory consists of Lake Superior, Lake Michigan, Lake Huron, Lake Ontario, and Lake Erie located on Turtle Island which is now known as Canada, the United States of America, and Mexico.
3. Kweok is the term used for women in Anishinaabemowin. I chose to use kweok because it was explained to me that only women had a word to remind all people of the importance of women in our culture. Women will be used when referencing a source.
4. The Moon is often referred to as the night sun which translates to Dibiki Giizis. In ceremony, women refer to the Moon as Nokomis Giizis translated to Grandmother Moon. As I am an Anishinaabe kwe (woman), I will refer to the Moon as Nokomis Giizis.
5. The Root River is a tributary of the Great Lakes emptying into the St Mary’s River. The St Mary’s River connects the Great Lakes of Superior and Huron.
6. Asema is used in offerings or as a stand-alone offering as an Anishinaabek protocol.
7. I can only speak from an Anishinaabek worldview because that is who I am.
8. Spelling of the words vary from Anishinaabek community to community.

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