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Research Article

Indigenous methodology: An ethical systems approach to arts based work with Native communities in the U.S.

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ABSTRACT

Given the context of colonialism, genocide and racism that surrounds Native communities in the U.S., this author suggests that arts-based practitioners consider an Indigenous methodology as an ethical and culturally respectful approach to the needs of Native people. In this article, the author describes Indigenous methodology, which includes a regard for Native sovereignty and critical analysis of systems that may still cause harm in Native community. The author also discusses excerpts and outcomes from applying an Indigenous methodology in collaboration with Native community along with further ethical considerations.

Description of the problem

Native people are the most medically underserved racial group in the United States (Indian Health Services, 2017; Warson, Taukchiray, & Barbour, 2013). This population has higher than average rates of poverty, violence, poor social and living conditions, substance misuse, suicide, and depression (Indian Health Services, 2017; National Congress of American Indians, 2015; Office of the General Counsel & U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2004; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Indian Health Service, & National Indian Health Board, 2016; Woods, 2012). Ethical and culturally appropriate practices that are focused on addressing American Indian mental health needs is important because of the alarming disparity in the U.S. mental health system in terms of meeting the needs of the American Indian population. This author suggests that arts-based practitioners consider an Indigenous methodology as an ethical and culturally responsive approach to the needs of Native people.

What is Indigenous Methodology?

Based on oral history shared in my Tribe, Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo ways of knowing, seeing, and thinking were engaged in strategic practices regarding our health and wellbeing before 1579, when colonizing systems were introduced to our Indigenous community. Indigenous methodology holds an equal position for Indigenous thought, vision, and ways of thinking when we find ourselves as academics and practitioners navigating historical colonial systems. Indigenous methodology employs our Native sovereignty, which is defined as "the power of a people to control their own destiny" (Wilson & Yellow Bird, 2005, p. 108). Contemporary dialogue about Indigenous methodology is located within the context of the American Genocide (Cameron & Phan, 2018; Madley, 2016) and the worldwide colonization and systematic efforts to eradicate Indigenous peoples. Early steps in an Indigenous methodology involve the deconstruction and critical analysis of colonial systems that provide terminology and a view on reality that may erase or regard Indigenous worldviews and meaning making as less valid. Indigenous methodology holds the emancipatory intent to interrupt silence about the past and compassionately reflect on the lives of our ancestors during the colonial process and genocide up to and including present day impacts on our communities (Chilisa, 2012; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2008; Wilson, 2008).

Indigenous methodology tells history and contextualizes current health, education, and economic disparities from a Native point of view and experience. Indigenous methodology employs a paradigm that challenges Western positivist/post-positivist assumptions in terms of what constitutes knowledge construction. As a community provider, educator, and California Indian Tribal member, I find resonance with Indigenous methodology which integrates both the spiritual and aesthetic in practices that support wellbeing and health (Wilson, 2008).

Indigenous methodology also makes room for respectful collaborations and approaches that do not polarize Indigenous methodology and Western academic research (Smith, 2000). However, this principle presents challenges and requires an investment in expansive skill sets and relationality. For example, to negotiate the many layers and boundary traveling among the living processes of culture and language in more than one cultural system requires sophistication with

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multilogical approaches (Graveline, 1998; Kenny, 2002; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008; Warson, 2012b). "Living through and integrating the thinking, visioning, talking, intuiting and/or writing of these layers (for some people and some sections using two languages) is the form of rigor demanded by the present forms of Indigenous scholarship" (Weber-Pillwax, 1999, p. 39).

In Indigenous methodology, we regard the past and current generations of collective effort to survive genocide as what marks the ground upon which we are walking today. Although it may seem obvious and even distressing to name, survival is still a necessary consideration for many Indigenous people. Unfortunately, there are still parts of the world where it is unsafe to be Indigenous. For example, the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls in Canada is disproportionately higher than any other race (Native Women's Association of Canada, 2015). There is emerging research to show that the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls is disproportionately higher in the U.S. as well (Lucchesi & Echo-Hawk, 2018). For this reason, Indigenous methodology must consider designs that promote the ongoing existence and consider the protection of Indigenous cultures and communities.

Indigenous methodology works to transform relations and systems of power beyond what has been introduced through colonization (Chilisa, 2012; Laenui, 2000; Smith, 1999, 2008). Indigenous notions of power include being rooted in Indigenous concepts of respect, balance, reciprocity, and peaceful coexistence (Grande, 2015, p. 78). These action strategies often work within an emergent design that allows an Indigenous community to respond within its specific context and local needs.

To not have a space to exist as a culture or a community, without original rhythms, languages, practices, or stories, potentiates a form of annihilation; this can also be a form of cultural genocide. Indigenous methodology creates a safe space for Indigenous people to exist; to communicate in our languages, to continue symbolizing, to dream, to express authentic identity, to tell our stories, to live in our sense of rhythm and time. Indigenous methodology (re)creates a space, after it has been interrupted, intruded upon, and torn down for generations, that is big enough to invite energy and focus, invoke spirit, and contribute to community (Diaz Soto, 2004; Smith, 1999).

To revisit the past is a difficult yet critical path in a decolonization practice for those who are transgenerationally impacted by a legacy of oppression. This visiting of our past requires a further resiliency as one notes that this legacy continues into our daily contemporary life. This work then becomes exhausting as dominant society does not recognize that this legacy indeed continues to impact our health, wellbeing, and spirit. Therefore, it is necessary that there be a practice for mourning in this process (Laenui, 2000) that allows for connection with our collective cultural knowledge and community as a form of strength and resiliency. It is also possible that resources that support resiliency may not be readily available to some Indigenous people given the extent of loss and ruptures in their community.

In a more personal reference, to mourn *our* history is to honor those before *us* who did not survive physically but survive in spirit, in story, and in what they passed on. It is an involved process to remain collectively embodied and congruent in affect with collective story and spirit. Collective embodiment in this context means that *we* are not experiencing this history as an individual, but through *our* attachment to *our* ancestors, where *our* ancestors stories are *our* stories. The experiences of *our* ancestors is still felt in *our* bodies today and *we* are still digesting all that has happened before *us* as *our* experience too. Indigenous methodology includes mourning as a path to remain authentic; to not dissociate or be silenced, which can lead to soul loss. This mourning may involve naming the abuses suffered by *our* ancestors and contextualizes how systematic oppression has impacted *our* community versus a belief that we are inherently a people identified by complex and historical trauma symptoms. As a personal example, I have a practice of listening to a suwe/love song that is sung by my great-great-aunt Sarah Ballard, one of the last fluent speakers of *our* Coast Miwok language. This suwe was audio recorded during an interview with a linguist in the early 1960s. I often find myself weeping as I listen and connect with *our* rhythms in her singing, reflecting with gratitude on her courage to share *our* spiritual practice while that practice was still illegal for Native people in the U.S.

In Indigenous methodology, the Indigenous people hold sovereignty as a core aspect in the methodology. The Native community directs their own identity formation principles, practices, and self-representation. It is important to note that as soon as one tries to define a methodology as Indigenous, one risks essentialism. Essentialism is "the belief that a set of unchanging properties (essences) delineate the construction of a particular category" (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008, p. 142), such as a too-rigid definition of what is Indigenous when regarding the concept of Indigenous methodology. Therefore, Indigenous methodology insists that the community involved must inform the concept of Indigenousness so that this perception does not become fixed and unchanging, kept in the past as a historic artifact, be determined by those outside of the community, or interrupt the sovereign identity formation process of the community (Chilisa, 2012; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008). Culture is living, breathing, emerging, and dynamic and so are Native communities.

Indigenous methodology is infused with core cultural sensibility and spiritual connections to reclaim purpose, community, and health through cultural grounding (Kovach, 2009). For example, as an impetus in the design of a research project, cultural grounding is "the way that culture nourishes the researcher's spirit during the inquiry, and how it nourishes the research itself" (Kovach, 2009, p. 115). This cultural grounding involves celebrations, rituals, and practices of our knowledge, language, ancestral spirit, cosmos, the spirit of the land/environment, stories, thinking patterns, worldview, beliefs, values, lifestyles, techniques, and collective memory—all of which may serve as a means for engaging people in the construction of their own knowledge and systems of health. When considering how to apply Indigenous methodology, it can include the arts, poetry, drama, storytelling, and critical personal narratives that represent and make Indigenous life visible (Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008). Indigenous methodology intrinsically involves art making, art performance, and community organizing to address social issues.

Excerpts from an application of Indigenous methodology

Contextualize colonization and genocide in the approach

Madley (2016), in his book An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, documented the systematic efforts of the U.S. government to eradicate California Indian people and cultural identity. According to Lemkin (1944), genocide has two phases: first, the destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed (Indigenous) group, and second, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor (p. 79). Indigenous methodology is an approach that has the potential to countervail the impact of these two phases of genocide. Indigenous methodology points to two reparative steps: first, the recreation and centering of the cultural pattern of the Indigenous group, and second, the critical deconstruction of the pattern imposed by the oppressor onto the Indigenous group. This critical deconstruction, which can also be termed decolonization, involves "dismantling structures that perpetuate the status quo, problematizing dominant discourses, and addressing unbalanced power dynamics… Decolonization also involves valuing and revitalizing Indigenous knowledge and approaches and weeding out settler biases or assumptions that have impacted Indigenous ways of being" (Antoine, Mason, Mason, Palahicky, & Rodriguez de France, n.d., p. 4–5). Each situation insists on critical reflection to deconstruct colonial influences while simultaneously reconstructing and centering Native community patterns. This author applied Indigenous methodology in her own research

Table 1
Themes of Indigenous Methodology.

Themes of Historical U.S. Indian Policy	Themes of Indigenous Methodology
To erase identity	To make visible
To silence	To give voice
To interrupt connection	To create and strengthen connections
To take away context	To re-contextualize and tell our whole story
To remove Indigenous performative practice	To create and continue performative practices
To subjugate Indigenous knowledge	To define Indigenous truth and reality
To nullify authority	To be the authority
To dehumanize	To humanize
To stop language	To continue and reacquisition Native language
To isolate	To build and strengthen community
To pit against each other	To develop trust and relationships
To disempower	To emancipate and empower with sovereignty
To take resources and land away	To resource with a space for creativity, imagination, and cultural reclamation

regarding an arts based identity formation process post genocide and included the two steps identified above. This article will now illustrate some brief examples of Indigenous methodology applied by this author. Please note that the purpose and scope of this article is to introduce Indigenous methodology, but will not fully represent all aspects, methods and design of this authors approach to Indigenous methodology.

Deconstruct patterns imposed on Native community

One step of critical analysis, for this author, involved cataloguing themes in historical U.S. Indian Policy. Themes identified in this analysis included the following (see Table 1): To erase Native identity; to silence Native voice and perspective; to interrupt connection among Native collective knowledge and community; to take away the context of genocidal practices in the dominant narrative; to remove Indigenous performative practice; to subjugate Indigenous knowledge; to nullify authority of Native government; to dehumanize Native people; to stop Native language; to isolate Native people; to pit Native people against each other; to disempower Native community and individuals; to take the resources and land of Native people (Napoli, 2018).

This author visited California State Parks on what was once the land of Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo people to research the historical narrative being shared with the public currently. After paying entry fees, reading all posted literature in the museums and information centers, and walking the grounds of these historic sites, the author recognized a significant lack of representation of the Native perspective. Noting this gap in representation, the author pursued a literature review with the purpose of prioritizing Native perspective and voice, which further identified the goals of the authors approach to Indigenous methodology (see Table 1).

Center the cultural pattern of the Indigenous group

Notes on language and frame of reference

At this point in the article, the author will reference the work from a first person point of view. The rationale is that third person language and examples do not hold or translate the culturally appropriate reference for the relationships discussed.

The use of us, we, and our

It's important for me to share a point of clarification about the use of *us*, *we*, and *our* in this writing. Although this article provides example of a personal approach to Indigenous methodology, I was not engaged as an individual, separate and alone, nor is this only my knowledge, where I am the only one engaging in the process. Therefore, as I write I cannot ethically speak as if these are my individual findings or considerations. I also am aware that I do not speak for anyone but myself. I am not claiming to be a voice for all of my Tribe, all of my ancestors, all Indigenous peoples, and so forth. Although I'm aware that I am not really alone in this writing, I cannot ethically represent any voice beyond my own either. Therefore, I am acknowledging that many insights were shared with me through an ongoing relationship of mutual intention and guidance from thousands of years of collective knowledge construction. My writing often speaks of *we*, *us*, and *our* knowledge for this reason, and I italicize these words in order to reference this intention. Although this may cause some confusion about how I am not only speaking from my personal point of view and experience, it is an ethical intention to acknowledge how much of this inquiry is not solely coming from my individual insights and knowledge.

Group identifiers

American Indian, Native American, Native American Indian, Indian, First Nation, Indigenous, Native, Aboriginal, and First People are all terms to identify the population I focus on for an Indigenous methodology. The preferred terminology is usually determined by the context for each particular person or community. To respect the autonomy of each person and community, I use the terminology interchangeably, based on the context and/or how the author I am referring to indicated or self-identified. When discussing the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria (FIGR), of which I am a citizen, I use the terms American Indian and Tribe in recognition of how *we* currently identify *our* community.

Tamal Machchaw/Coast Miwok language

Tamal Machchaw/Coast Miwok language has been highly documented by two linguists who worked primarily with my great-great-aunt Sarah Ballard. Although I am not a linguist nor a fluent speaker of *Tamal Machchaw*, I treat *Tamal Machchaw* as a living language and have constructed new phrasings for the purposes of this dialogue. I offer apologies for any grammatical errors that may have occurred with my struggle to communicate via *Tamal Machchaw* with beginner competency. My use of the language to communicate complex *pichaṣnako*/concepts is a subjective meaning-making process, and it may not be possible to confirm that my use of the words is what has been referenced by earlier documented sources. I collaborate as possible with my Tribe's identified forums and protocol to continue this work for the purpose of *our* language reacquisition and to honor of *our* ancestors and culture.

Three examples of an application of Indigenous methodology through the arts

Example 1: Ka Tamalko Pichaṣnako/Concept map

Fig. 1 symbolizes the concepts I first considered in applying Indigenous methodology. The composition shows the *pichaṣnako*/concepts coming together in equal relationship to create and inform a central space for Indigenous practice. *Tamal Machchaw,* one of my

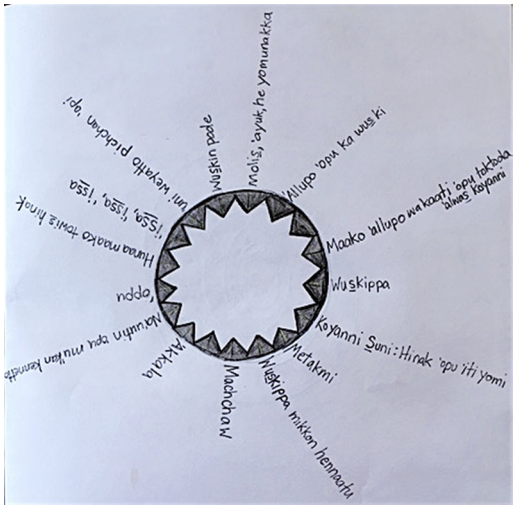

Fig. 1. Personal Concept Map Informed by Tamal Machchaw/Coast Miwok Language.

Native languages, informs the image as the source language. That is, writing about theory and concepts of Indigenous methodology while maintaining the discourse in English actually would have interrupted the core intention to center the cultural pattern of Native community. To meet this challenge, I sought to establish an equal position and prioritizing of *Tamal Machchaw* and Native voices in all efforts. Artwork was another source to illuminate the complexity and meaning that was not possible to translate through words alone. The *pichaṣnako*/concepts that hold the center of this approach can be translated into English as: respect (with humility); to remember; Native language; *our* stories; listening to the heart; gratitude, hope, and beauty; so that *we* do good; respect all relations; returning all together; questioning and critical analysis; Singing Nest: making a home space; *we* listen deeply to the Elderberry Tree singing; be a student in many worlds; maintain commitment; engage in grieving.

Example 2: 'Akkalako/Stories as outcomes

As Doerfler, Sinclair, and Stark (2013) stated, "we create ourselves with stories" (p. xx). *'Akkala*/story awakens spaces for *our* cultural community to share about who *we* are and build relationships within *our* own traditions and worldview. In this application of Indigenous methodology, I included the *pichaṣna*/concept of *'akkala*/story because with stories *we* speak from *our* collective knowledge and engage in conversations with *our* ancestors as *we* confront challenges. Doerfler et al. (2013) center story in Indigenous methodology because stories provide a way to self-determine one's cultural identity and direction, develop community in new ways while also deepening relationships with ancestors, and teach us how to imagine and survive change.

In stories we make visible both the legacy of *our* cultural erasure and cultural continuity through a self-determined narrative emerging post-genocide (Sarris, 1997; Sarris, 2017). The artwork below comes from my engagement with embodied story fragments, spirit, and relationships while joining with *our* collective story. These paintings at times represent parts of *our* collective story waking up and what *our* story is telling me, and at times represent latent connections with parts of my own identity coming to voice. From these paintings I have written stories to strengthen these voices and connect with more stories; a kind of weaving into *our* cultural fabric. Fig. 2 is an example of a painting telling a *'akkala*/story about *our* Death March, when the U.S. government marched *our* ancestors off of *our* land for 147 miles to the imposed reservation.

A key outcome of this application of Indigenous methodology was the nonlinear process of sharing stories and artwork with all of my relations, including my ancestors and children, to continue "story

Fig. 2. 'Ekeeya Tulawwa 'Oppoy/Vulture Death March.

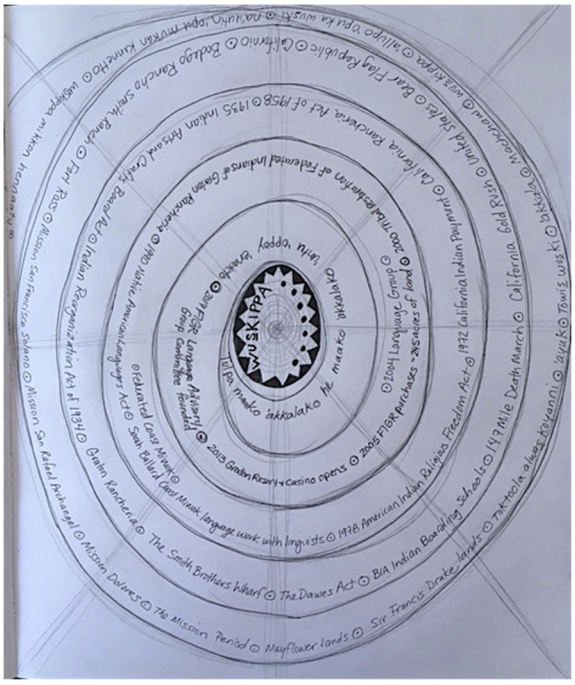

Fig. 3. Pichaṣna 'Ewiṣ/Knowledge Basket.

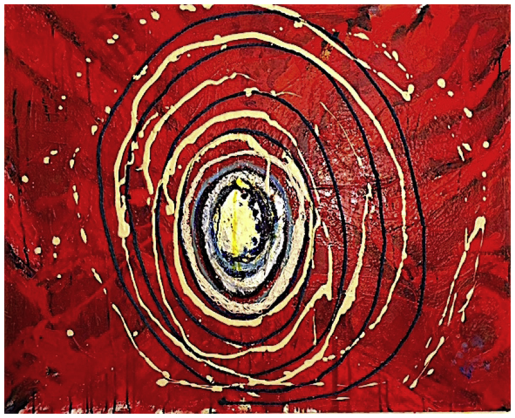

Fig. 4. 'Awwuk 'Ewiṣ/Abalone Basket.

Fig. 5. Kanni ‘Opu Panak/I Am the Acorn Woodpecker.

loops” that honor and build relationships within my cultural meaning-making process. Figs. 3–5 reflect an early dreamscape understanding of story loops emerging in the process. By “story loops” I mean a process of engaging with a story or story thread, followed by weaving in additional story thread(s) generated from the applied Indigenous methodology, and then sharing the story as a response to join with the original story or story thread; a weaving together of *our Pichaṣna ‘Ewiṣ*/Knowledge Basket (see Fig. 3). Thus, the process became a living conversation that speaks directly to *our* history and holds both *our* past and present while *we* navigate changes and challenges to support *our* community and next generations.

All of these story pieces are waking up together with the artwork, created with the intention that they be witnessed. These stories hold different layers, time, and moments of experiencing and coming into a relationship with the whole story. Ethically, I hold each medium, language, sensibility, and relationship as separate as well as together, so that I don’t lose or prioritize one voice from the story when it is coming into contact with another voice. These stories I offer in gratitude to my community as my most authentic exploration into my identity through Indigenous methodology.

Example 3: Tsupu’s Story

To frame the reader’s understanding of the example that follows, I will describe my collaboration with Dr. Cedric Woods (Lumbee) and the Institute for New England Native American Studies in an exhibit titled *Native American Resilience Through Art.* For this group exhibit with two other Native artists, Kristen Wyman (Natick Nipmuc) and Nia Holley (Nipmuc), I shared 14 paintings (with corresponding stories) about my identity formation process at the University of Boston in Massachusetts. These paintings were selected from the 65+ art pieces I created over the past 20 years that informed my application of Indigenous methodology. There was a reception at the exhibit opening where I presented the story of Tsupu, my ancestor, and spoke *our Wee’a*/Blessing.

Tsupu (see Fig. 6), my grandmother from five generations back, is also one of my primary “co-researchers in spirit.” Reading essays and following genealogy notes about Tsupu, listening in for Tsupu’s spirit while painting, listening to Elders share their stories about Tsupu, and

Fig. 6. Tsupu Tuppe/Tsupu Emerges.

piecing together body-based memory fragments and conversations with the land into my own storying process has been one phase of applying Indigenous methodology. Making art about and telling Tsupu’s story as my own story was another phase.

In *Tsupu Tuppe*/Tsupu Emerges (Fig. 6), Tsupu and I are emerging together; me in my identity as a Native woman artist and Tsupu as a resilient ancestor still singing and honored in *our* Native community. I feel that this painting is waking up *our* collective story together because when I prayed for her support to know how to maintain my cultural center, I felt her presence as a kind of singing. After what felt like a leap of faith, I completed the painting *Tsupu Tuppe*/Tsupu Emerges, and put her/*our* image as an open-hearted, Native woman in a public space as part of the exhibit *Native American Resilience Through Art.* As I hung this painting in the room to join with all of the other paintings telling *our* story, I realized that I have joined with her and that *we* are now singing together.

At the art reception, I shared Tsupu’s story and my belief that telling her story in Massachusetts was completing an important story loop: I was continuing to honor her spirit in Massachusetts while also knowing that her master, who had claimed her land and her own personhood as his property, was born and raised in Massachusetts. Coming from a worldview where the land holds memory and spirit, telling *our* story while standing in a certain place matters. I believe that in telling *our* story *we* are reawakening *our* sovereignty and spirit and insisting that *our* experience still be valued and responded to in ongoing relationships rather than being disregarded or silenced. By telling Tsupu’s story to this audience, I was inviting those at the exhibit to engage in respectful relationship with Tsupu by joining me in honoring her story. I believe this action of telling Tsupu’s story may wake up further awareness and respectful responses on the part of the story witnesses.

Present at the event were many Native people—including those who identify as Wampanoag and Nipmuc—who have inhabited present day Massachusetts for thousands of years. These people also have been impacted by my great-great-great-great-grandfather Stephen Smith’s family line, extending back to the Mayflower and the first Pilgrims. Originally, I felt that my role and purpose was simply to respect and honor Tsupu’s spirit and life. Upon further reflection, I now sense that I have been short-sighted about my story loop. By allowing *our* story circle to extend and ripple further, I can intentionally honor and respect all of the Native people who have been impacted by my family through the Pilgrim/colonial line.

As a result of this application of Indigenous methodology, I am grappling today with my unique position to acknowledge and to story the many ways that my family has been in this world creating and

impacting relationships. I do not take responsibility for what my colonial-aligned family members did in the past, but I do wonder about how their spirits may inform my reparative steps to make visible the whole story and shift away from painful silencing and disregard of Native experience. This is just another aspect of what I am breaking open and reflecting on as a result of my process; there are so many connections to consider.

I believe the next phase of my application of Indigenous methodology will involve presenting my artwork and personal story connection with Tsupu to the public and "listening in" for a response. By listening in for a response, I mean that I will listen for the way Tsupu and other spirit communicate to me during art making in my studio, in my walking the land, in my dreams, listening to *our* songs, learning *our* Native languages, and in my relationships with those connected with spirit in the same way. I want to know what is waking up, what connections become woven together, and how this step of Indigenous methodology informs or "speaks to" my artwork, in songs, storying, and relationships, thus directing me in further steps to connect in more story loops.

Further ethical considerations

Because the intention was on maintaining my cultural center, I sought ways to prioritize and apply ethical and respectful considerations from Indigenous methodology [1]. In my case this means my process and decision making was informed by my dreamscapes, immersion in cultural spaces with spirit, walking *our* land, listening to *our* songs, consulting with Tribal members, first people, and *our* stories, learning/*our* Native languages, and deeply listening to what was communicated in all of these relationships. In this sense, an ethical process involves deeply listening and walking in many worlds/dimensions simultaneously.

Incorporating the *pichaṣnako*/concepts from my application of Indigenous methodology, I engaged in ongoing self-reflexive assessment that questioned and examined all internal validity and ethical considerations based on whether I had achieved the following in the affirmative:

- Have I shown respect in all choices and actions?
- Have I held the center for *our* cultural worldview?
- Have I remembered *our* history, people, stories, and culture from *our* worldview?
- Have I brought in *our* Native languages to the center?
- Have I listened to *our* stories?
- Have I listened to my heart?
- Have I applied critical analysis to decolonize frameworks that erase *our* identity and perspective?
- Have I maintained gratitude, hope, and beauty?
- Am I doing good in this world through this process?
- Have I respected all relations?
- Have I returned to build *our* relationships?
- Have I constructed a safe/protected space for *us* to dream, to reflect, to symbolize, to exist?
- Have I listened deeply for *our* original rhythms?
- Have I been a student in and learned from many worldviews?
- Have I remained fully committed in this process?
- Have I allowed room for grieving?
- Have I released creative forces of energy to imagine/reimagine and further humanize/contextualize my community (Smith, 2012)?

In further consideration of the ethics, it is important to contextualize that my story is not the sacred story of my Tribe and I am not the Tribal expert on *our* stories. Rather, my stories are the result of engaging in Indigenous methodology, are my way of joining in relationship with the mysteries of spirit and with my kinship ties, and are reflections from my changing perceptions about my identity. My story and art come from a vital, generative space that is informing my life and connecting me with other life as well. In terms of identifying validity and outcomes, I do not assume to know how my work will play out with my community or to know whether it will be received as beneficial; only time will tell. Although I am gaining insights about Indigenous methodology, I also accept with humility and respect what I don't know, what I cannot control, and that I am not at the center—I am not an expert on or spokesperson for my Tribe, *our* stories, history, or language.

Discussion

Culturally responsive practice with Native community may occur when a Native community has the sovereignty to determine the design and implementation of the work such that it serves the community's needs (Dufrene, Coleman, & Gainor, 1992; National Congress of American Indians, 2015; Smith, 2012; Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration et al., 2016; Warson, 2012a; Wilson, 2008). Implied in this statement is the belief that the people who design the tools and systems hold the real power over others (Smith, 1999). Historically, after Indigenous peoples experienced subjugation, abuses, and death under the design of external systems, *we* learned that *we* are better off designing *our* own methodologies and systems. The challenge is not just about racism, but also "about the nature of truth and reality" (Ladson-Billings, as cited in Kovach, 2009, p. 28). An Indigenous methodology creates a space for Indigenous views on truth and reality to inform academic institutions, mental health services, and policy discussions. Indigenous values and beliefs can thus inform a reflexive cycle of evolving, growing, and updating our own knowledge base (Henry & Penne, as cited in Cram, 2009).

Since sovereignty of the Native community is the ethical and core aspect of the work, what becomes noteworthy is that arts-based providers, then, may find themselves outside of the center of the work. Indeed, the arts-based provider may not be the expert, the one to diagnose the community, or authorize any decisions. The arts-based provider is not necessarily the one to solve the problem or be part of the answer. Instead, in Indigenous methodology, the arts-based provider walks in humility alongside the people without interrupting, interpreting, or claiming any power in our role other than that of humble witness in a reciprocal relationship; an authentic relationship that increases with trustworthiness through the experience of respectful collaboration over a lifetime. I believe this is an ethical practice whether we are Native or non-Native.

Commitment to respect and non-interference is an ethic of Indigenous methodology. When working with Indigenous communities in a cross-cultural engagement I propose, as an ethical practice, to remain committed to one's personal identity formation work first and foremost—to fully know and honor the full extent of one's own story. As a person of mixed race in relationship with a history of genocide I am slowly understanding how to respect all of myself and my story. While listening carefully from within different parts of my identity and story, I gain new awareness about how to respect and honor different worldviews; this lends me more awareness and ability to respect others as well. From an ethical perspective, I ask that we all remember to slow down and pay attention to what arrives for us when we meet with others on the borders of worldviews and cross-cultural understanding. This is a process of walking with cultural humility. Cultural humility involves an ongoing process of self-reflection and discovery in order to build honest and trustworthy relationships while respecting others, their background, worldview, and experience (Yeager & Bauer, 2013). In this way I hope we can build a reciprocal relationship, as we walk a parallel path, that brings us closer to an authentic understanding of

[1] Please refer to Author's doctoral dissertation for further description of analysis and method design.

ourselves and meet in a mutually honoring space where we negotiate with open hearts terms of respect and power with each other.

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