

**A Review of *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know Indigenous Re-Search Methodologies*
(2nd ed.)**

Jessica Madiratta

University of Regina

In her book *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know Indigenous re-Search Methodologies* (2nd ed.), author Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogiizhigokwe) divides her writing into two parts. Part 1 is about engaging Kaandossiwin in re-searching, and Part 2 is about wholistic re-search methodologies. In the preface, Absolon explains, “*Kaandossiwin* is an Anishinaabe word that describes a process of how we come to know—a process of acquiring knowledge” (p. xvi). She privileges, honours, and celebrates several Indigenous academics throughout the book. Her reference list at the end provides the reader with many resources to help them on their re-search journeys.

As an Indigenous graduate student, reading this book was a healing journey for me. The author writes how graduate students in her courses often come to her classes terrified of research because of the elitism and jargon in research discourse. Like her students, I found myself feeling terrified prior to, during, and even after my research courses. I scanned the syllabuses in my courses for articles and discussions on Indigenous research methodologies because I was seeking a connection to other Indigenous people in the academy. I had difficulties connecting to colonial research methodologies that I read about, and this book provided answers to why I struggle to connect with colonial research methodologies: These colonial research methodologies do not connect with my worldview as an Indigenous student.

In Part 1, Absolon explores engaging with the process of re-searching with Kaandossiwin. She figuratively offers the reader a cup of tea and some bannock as they begin reading. As a Cree woman I understand this approach to starting something “in a good way.” I often found myself drinking a cup of tea as I engaged with the chapters of this book. I would also light a smudge before reading this book. Absolon’s writing style provided a reading experience that felt like having a conversation with the author herself. I found it so personal that she engages in conversations throughout the book with many Indigenous academics. One of the foundational topics Absolon writes about is the painful history of research that has been done on Indigenous peoples and communities. From this topic she transitions into healing from colonial research trauma. In Chapter 4, Absolon provides a wholistic four directions search pathway for the reader as a planning guide using 12 beads as the framework. The eastern direction (Beads 1 to 4) includes vision, purpose, principles, and direction. The researcher is challenged to identify their vision—what are they looking for? With the second bead, the researcher identifies their search and generates possible question(s). The third bead stage involves gathering existing knowledge and searching for literature. The fourth bead involves envisioning a wholistic methodology for how to conduct the search. The southern direction (Beads 5 to 10) includes ethics, relational accountability, and gathering. With Bead 5, the researcher asks what principles and ethics will guide them and how? With Bead 6, the researcher asks who they will talk to for gathering knowledge, experiences, and stories? With Bead 7, the researcher asks how they will gather? During Bead 8, the researcher attends to ethics and informed consent. With Bead 9, the researcher identifies conflicts, such as potential tensions or conflicts of interest. With Bead 10, the researcher identifies safety issues—ensuring people in the process are both safe and well. The western direction (Bead 11) includes knowledge gathering, meaning making, and knowledge building. The northern direction (Bead 12) involves knowledge sharing and mobilization. Here Absolon humbly

leaves the reader with a statement of intent: “My intention has always been to leave good footprints and landmarks so that those coming behind me would have a softer trail to travel while employing, journeying, articulating and affirming Indigenous methodologies in how we come to know” (p. 127). I think this statement portrays the importance of using Indigenous methodologies for the next generation of Indigenous graduate students.

In Part 2, Absolon explores wholistic re-search methodologies. What I really appreciated about this section is the use of visuals: Absolon’s petal flower, which she uses as a wholistic framework. The petal flower framework encompasses the roots, flower centre, leaves, stem, petals, and environment. The roots of the framework represent the grounding of the search. The flower centre represents the explicit description of the importance of self to the search. The leaves represent the explanation of the journey, process, and transformation. The stem represents the methodological backbone and supports. The petals represent the diverse ways of searching for knowledge. Last, the environment of the petal flower refers to the academic context. In this section, Absolon reviews journal articles, book chapters, and dissertations published in the last decade and organizes them into the following areas/petals: spirit/vision, heart: relationships, reciprocity, and community, mind: respecting Indigenous knowledge, and body: doing, working, and creating. One of the complexities explored in the spirit and vision section is how some spiritual knowledge cannot be written or shared in written text. One interesting learning from the section on heart is that most of the Indigenous searchers Absolon worked with had pre-existing relationships with their re-search participants because relationships are a resource for Indigenous re-search. Within the mind petal, Absolon states that we need to privilege Indigenous scholarship to develop Indigenous methodologies. The petal body represents the exploration of physical enactments of the re-search process because the exclusive use of written words does not encapsulate a culture that is experiential.

In reading a book about Indigenous methodologies, I am reminded of the many trailblazers (as Absolon refers to them) that have made space for Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the academy. Absolon does, however, provide some cautionary tales to the reader about the experiences Indigenous re-searchers have and will face within the academy. The colonial environment in the academy is resistance to the changes of Indigenous resurgence. Indigenous re-searchers will experience fence and gatekeepers within the academy that want to privilege Western forms of knowledge production. Indigenous re-searchers are reminded of the importance of who makes up their committee. If they cannot have an all-Indigenous committee then non-Indigenous allies are crucial members. Other prickly areas she explores include appropriation, sacred knowledge bundles, quantitative research, Western standards and measurement in research, and methodology traps.

In the last chapter, *Leaving Good Footprints and Winding Down*, Absolon provides several key elements for conscious Indigenous re-researchers using the petal flower framework, some of which I will highlight here. Within the roots, the reader is encouraged to prioritize Indigenous knowledge in the re-search. Within the flower's centre, the reader is reminded to know your location on the re-search journey. Within the leaves, the reader learns to travel journeys that are emergent and transformative. Within the stem, the reader is challenged to confront colonial history and to unpack its impacts. Within the petals, Absolon suggests that researchers use culturally relative methods. Last, within the environmental contexts, researchers should make strategic decisions about obstacles and gatekeepers within the academy.

To conclude, I offer thanks to the author for the reminders to include myself in my research story, to re-member my relations, to unpack the impacts of colonial research trauma, and to connect with other Indigenous academics. These are all important reminders for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous searchers looking to engage in wholistic methodologies. Just as she starts the book in a good way, Absolon also ends the book in a good way by sharing that Indigenous re-searchers are successfully defending their theses and fueling Indigenous knowledge resurgence.

Reference

Absolon, K. E. (2022). *Kaandossiwin: How we come to know Indigenous re-search methodologies* (2nd ed.). Fernwood.