"Self" in Self-Study: Alongside Stories as Indigenously Understood Inquiry

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Abstract

As part of our ethical responsibilities as scholar-practitioners and community members living as uninvited guests on Indigenous territories, we engaged in a collaborative inquiry to explore ways in which Indigenous pedagogies and worldviews extend understandings of self within self-study research. Over several years, we engaged in reflective conversations about our respective tensions, challenges, and successes in the effort to decolonize and Indigenize our pedagogies and research. These conversations moved us over time to a particular orientation as we shared our life stories as educators and women. We began by documenting our experiences and reflections at each meeting and shared in meaning making how our orientations shifted to ways of being in relation. The emerging synergies of our relationality led us to name our experiences "alongside stories," in which we made meaning of the intersections and nuances between forms of self-study research and Indigenous Ways of Knowing. In sharing the alongside stories, we re-presented our collaborative understandings of inquiry as interweavings. These interweavings allowed us to explore how our knowledge and belief systems could be intertwined and disentwined to reveal resonances and particularities. Our exploration led us to reframe inquiry and self-study as Indigenously understood.

Keywords: Indigenous, self-study, research, decolonizing, inquiry; alongside stories

Introduction

In this paper, we intend to explore ways in which Indigenous pedagogies and worldviews extend understandings of self within self-study. In this way, we engage in self-study as a research methodology that can be informed and transformed by Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. Specifically, we clarify and expand on methodologies related to self-study research, particularly in relation to those methods drawn from Indigenous Inquiry (Cajete, 1994; Kelly, 2010; Wilson, 2008). In our work, we draw upon Indigenous scholars from diverse Nations, including Cajete (1994), Kelly (2021b), Meyer (2008), and Wilson (2008), who share inclusive views of Indigenous inquiry, emphasizing storytelling (Wilson, 2008), (w)holism (Archibald, 2008), enmeshment (Donald, 2021), and reciprocal relationality (Kelly, 2016). We intend to give examples of the exploration of living well at the intersection of these methodologies and worldviews to offer a transsystemic synthesis (Battiste & Henderson, 2009) that invites us into kinship relationality (Donald, 2021; Kelly, 2021b).

The process of collaborating through self-study involved honouring our collective affinities within communities of resonance and acknowledging the role of walking alongside and witnessing one another. In terms of our research, this meant exploring our 'selves' as post-secondary educators and engaging in witnessing one another as we shared stories alongside each other. Our learning stories about our journeys towards understanding Indigenous inquiry, and how this transformed us in practice, were situated within particular places, spaces, and educational landscapes, and were contextualized within relational webs of knowing (Wilson, 2008). The nature of these unique interconnections and how they are expressed through a pedagogy grounded, literally and figuratively, in Indigenous place-based Knowledges, pedagogies and practices are explored deeply in this paper.

A central lens through which we explored the self as Indigenously understood within self-study was ethical relationality (Donald, 2009; Wilson, 2008). As Donald (2009) suggests, Indigenous Métissage promotes ethical relationality "as a curricular and pedagogical standpoint…[with] an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to more deeply understand how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other" (Donald, 2009, p. 6). Self-study research centres on exploring researchers' life histories and experiences in order to enact relationships that transform our perspectives, beliefs, and practices. Through the lens of ethical relationality, we [explored] our identities as educators embedded within complex webs of what it means to live on this land in the place, we now call Canada (Donald, 2009).

An important lens to situate ourselves in this work as a collective of scholars from diverse ancestral backgrounds came from the teachings of one of our authors, Vicki. We were invited to recognize our diversity of humanness without othering ourselves or each other. Our identities were not merged, nor juxtaposed, and the authenticity of our experiences was lifted rather than suppressed by our collaborative engagement with each other. This work emerged out of the spaces of learning within and between us, both individually and collectively. The inquiry we began helped us form a kinship, a relationality where we nourished our collective resonance as co-inquirers and family on this journey towards a radical re-animating, re-imagining, and re-storying of our vision of the living pathways of becoming fully human.

As teacher-educators and practitioner-scholars working within the contexts of decolonization (Battiste, 2013; Donald, 2009; McDermott et al., 2022), Indigeneity (Absolon,

2021; Kelly, 2022; Wilson, 2008), and reconciliation (Kelly et al., 2019; Wilson & Nelson-Moody, 2019; Wilson et al., 2019), we have become increasingly unsettled by western research paradigms. The tension of paradigms that further the colonial project is one we navigate in the spaces of academia. We struggle with the potential that research might have to perpetuate othering, sever relationships, or presume that relationships are superfluous to knowledge-generation processes. Instead, we are drawn to practices of inquiry that centre humanity within (humanize) all aspects of our research, and the self is informed and transformed through engaging in those practices. This perspective aligns closely with elements of Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices also known as S-STEP (Bullock, 2017; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009). Here, the focus of research is on the "ontological space between self and other […] where knowledge emerges as teacher educators uncover their knowing in relationship" (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2014, p. 156). The self-study as a form of research is a hybrid method of inquiry (Fletcher, 2019) that draws from other similar traditions, such as narrative inquiry, auto-ethnography, and auto-biographical research, but is a distinct line of research in and of itself.

For the purposes of this paper, we speak generally to the notion of self-study as a way of knowing in research aligned with S-STEP methods. Although self-study moves us closer to the decolonization of research by shifting the focus of the study from others (including students, colleagues, and/or families) to ourselves as educators in relation to practice, it is largely steeped in Western philosophical assumptions. As part of our ethical responsibilities as Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators and community members, we have a responsibility to understand research differently through an Indigenous lens.

In this inquiry, we collectively sought to better understand the resonances and distinctions between the self-study of teaching practice and Indigenous/ist inquiry. We draw upon Indigenous scholars from diverse Nations, including Cajete (1994), Kelly (2021b), Meyer (2008), and Wilson (2008), who share inclusive views of Indigenous inquiry, emphasizing enmeshment (Donald, 2021), reciprocal relationality (Kelly, 2016). To this end, we engaged in a collaborative inquiry to explore how self-study protocols and practices could be Indigenously understood. How could self-study be 'seen' through Indigenous ways of knowing and being? What language could help to 'lift up' self-study out of the Western paradigm and bring meaning to it through Indigenist language? How would this inquiry shape our research moving forward? These questions formed the basis of our inquiry and enabled us to think and imagine freely, unencumbered by Western methodological constraints.

As teacher educators, all five of us carry with us respective wisdom and lived experiences of Indigenous knowledge systems and/or self-study scholarship to our collective. Bringing our unique perspectives to bear at the intersections of these two overlapping methodological spheres provides important insights to the conversation about 'Indigenizing' research. Like the paddlers in the Hokule canoe (as discussed by Kau'i below), each author has particular capacities and ancestries, and we can rely on each other to get the canoe to where it is going and to keep it safe. And like the push and pull of the canoe on the water, together there is also an ebb and flow of knowledge sharing. If one of us doesn't know something, we can turn to our colleagues to help us understand and we can pull from our own experiences of what is being discussed. Over our four years of inquiry, our understandings have shifted and grown.

Intersectionality predisposes us to acknowledge the contentious and problematic design of education as one rooted in colonization and a historical context of Eurocentric worldviews perpetuated on these lands. Even acknowledging land in our respective institutions becomes a

process of confronting our complicated relationships with the land and how this implicates our work as teacher educators. Acknowledging that we live on Indigenous lands means we have a responsibility to learn about settler colonialism (Donald, 2009) and its impact on Indigenous peoples. This guides us as educators and scholars toward developing ethical, caring relationships with the land, the community of humans and more than human.

To this end, our commitment to collectively explore self-study research is informed by, and interwoven with, Indigenous ways of knowing, seeing, and being in relationship with the world (Archibald, 2008; Battiste, 2010; Cajete, 1994; Donald, 2009; Kelly, 2010; Meyer, 2008; Wilson, 2008). We draw on Indigenous scholars and resources in our work, adhere to protocols when including Elders and ceremonies, and embed First Peoples Principles of Learning[1] in our teaching. Our research and practice are increasingly dependent on the stories that connect us as settlers and Indigenous people to truths about land and place. We engage in an ongoing, continuous project of learning and growing as Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators.

Against this backdrop, and as university educators who are committed to the disciplined study of our own practice as teachers, we notice important resonances between self-study methodology and Indigenous research methodologies in terms of epistemology and ontology (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009), as well as important distinctions. In the colliding of worldviews (Littlebear, 2000), that can be present within scholarship, the fact is that our experiences have been more of a 'weaving together' of Indigenous ways of knowing with self-study. In particular, we are curious about the potential for the field of self-study research to be understood differently through Indigenous worldviews and become enlivened by Indigenous knowing, being, and doing. Given that self-study does not privilege any particular methodology, self-study scholars attempt to remain "unencumbered by the epistemological constraints of a singular research method […] to draw as necessary from varied approaches" (Martin, 2018, p. 265). Exactly what those varied approaches, connections, and synergies are helping us broaden and unbind self-study from its Western roots. Additional questions we consider are: How have our ethical commitments towards Indigeneity, decolonization, and Indigenization, extended into the ways we reframe self-study research? How is self-study informed and transformed by Indigenous scholarship and perspectives? How can this 'learning from' Indigenous ways of knowing and being resist appropriation and remain true to our efforts for ethical relationality? What are the implications for us as teacher educators in terms of practice and inquiry?

To explore these questions and honour the ethical desire "to reread and reframe historical understanding in ways that cause readers to question their own assumptions and prejudices", (Donald, 2009, pp. 5-6), we turn to intimate scholarship (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2015). Methodologically, this requires us to take a pause and reflect as Greene (1995) reminds us, to see "the particularities and intricacies in the lives of those who are deeply entangled in educational settings" (as cited in Strom et al., 2018, p. 2) and to become sensitive to the relational and wholistic ways of knowing and researching. Currently, limited literature exists that links Indigenous knowledge systems with epistemological and/or methodological foundations of self-study (see Markides, 2018; Martin et al., 2020), yet as scholars who are experienced to varying levels in both areas, we see significant resonances and complementarity. To resist a 'flattening' of the two

[1] First Peoples Principles of Learning were developed by the First Nations Education Steering Committee in 2012. These principles have formed the foundation for Indigenizing the Kindergarten to grade 12 education system and they are referenced in teacher education programs in BC.

methodologies, we also acknowledge dissonances and distinctions that retexturize both in new ways. This brings us to the central question driving this study: What can we learn from Indigenously informed understandings of self-study?

Context

In 2019, a regional network of Self-study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) scholars was launched as part of a sabbatical project by one of the authors. An outcome of that network was to create opportunities for S-STEP researchers to collaborate on studies of interest. At the network session held at CSSE 2019 in Vancouver, we met as a collective of five teacher educators from different institutions interested in exploring our experiences as Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators engaged in Indigeneity, decolonizing, and Indigenous pedagogies, in our respective programs.

Acknowledging the importance of S-STEP to our scholarship and practice, we recognized an opportunity to delve deeper and critically reflect on our experiences. In our initial meeting and through the early stages of the study, we focused mostly on our practices within programs, sharing particular pedagogical experiences and discussing scholars who had influenced us in our thinking towards transforming teacher education contexts. However, as our conversations meandered, we stepped outside ourselves and "looked large" (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2014, p. 155) at our work. It was at this juncture that we came to appreciate the richness of our "coming-to-know" (Hamilton & Pinnegar, 2014, p. 159) process through discussions and dialogue about epistemologies, ontologies, and axiology, in our responsibilities as educators, scholars, and people, residing on Indigenous lands. The study moved from a focus on pedagogy to conversations about Indigenous ways of Knowing and Being prompting us to understand self-study research differently.

Lenses of Knowing

Intimate Scholarship

Hamilton and Pinnegar (2014) present intimate scholarship as an approach to self-study research that places value on the particular, acknowledges the relational, uses dialogue as a means for coming-to-know, and respects embodied ways of enacting practice. "Intimate scholarship provides a way to plug into and engage with educational phenomena that often remain hidden or ignored in other forms of research" (Strom et al., 2018, p. 4). This approach promotes individual knowing in context and within social milieus and situated experiences rather than as derived from statistics and pre-determined conceptual frameworks which can serve to mask the particularities of the experience. Hamilton and Pinnegar (2014) remind us that intimate scholarship, ontologically, pushes researchers to 'see large' and understand the whole of and wholistically that which they are studying. In contrast, they argue that teacher educators increasingly see practice as 'small' by privileging epistemology over ontology, consequently narrowing the scope of what is learned. Thus, intimate scholarship engages researchers in knowing 'self in practice' to the self in ethically relational ways. This circularity is crucial in terms of future discussions in this study.

Another lens informing our inquiry is Elder Albert Marshall's (2004) *Etuaptmumk* or Two-Eyed Seeing, described as, "learning to see from one eye with the strengths of, or the best in, the Indigenous Knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye learning to see with the strengths of, and the best in, the western (Mainstream) knowledges and ways of knowing, but most importantly learning to use both these eyes together, for the benefit of all" (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 331). While Two-Eyed Seeing practices run the risk of amalgamating Indigenous knowledge

within colonial frameworks (Iwama et al., 202; Reid et al., 2020), we honour knowledge practices that recognize collective affinities and maintain the distinctness of the worldviews. Two-Eyed Seeing establishes the value of seeking interconnections between self-study research (grounded in Western epistemology) and Indigenous research (see Martin et al., 2020). While Indigenous and Western paradigms are not homogeneous by any means, some commonalities often are consistent across diversities. As Blackstock (2019) asserts:

> Indigenous peoples think their ancestors are mostly right; Western thought assumes their ancestors are mostly wrong or underdeveloped. Indigenous peoples believe in unified and interdependent theories; Western theories like to break things down. Indigenous peoples believe in expansive concepts of time and space; Western theories focus on one lifespan. Indigenous peoples believe all relationships matter; Western theories think only human relationships, or subsets of human relationships, matter. (pp. 855-856)

The researcher within closed systems comprehends differently and learns different things; conversely, a researcher who is not bound by the same time and space is allowed to be connected spiritually to the past, present, and future (Blackstock, 2019). Within our work, this approach of seeing from two worldviews allows researchers to gain a greater vantage of the whole. In later sections, we also raise the point made by Marshall (2004) about 'many-eyed seeing' in understanding the pluriverse of worlds within worlds (Escobar, 2020).

A third lens that we use to address our questions is ethical relationality (Donald, 2009; Wilson, 2008). As Donald (2009) suggests, ethical relationality is a "curricular and pedagogical standpoint…[with] an ecological understanding of human relationality that does not deny difference, but rather seeks to more deeply understand how our different histories and experiences position us in relation to each other" (Donald, 2009, p. 6). Given that Indigenous worldviews dispose us to consider the human relationality of our work, the potential exists to inform self-study research that centers on exploring researchers' life histories and experiences. In positioning ourselves, we reposition relationships in research to transform our perspectives, beliefs, practices, and ultimately ourselves.

Methodology

As a starting point, we employed several self-study methods, all of which align with Laboskey's (2004) criteria for self-study research: our inquiry was self-initiated, focused, interactive, and included multiple methods (Laboskey, 2004; Laboskey & Richert, 2015). In addition, the centrality of intimate scholarship in our methodological approach signalled our attention to the spaces of self-study research. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) suggest self-study "emerges between what we believe and how we act […] the space between our public and private lives […and] the space between ourselves and the others (present and absent) who are involved in our practice" (p. 14). Furthermore, as Beck et al. (2004) remind us, self-study is "a personal-constructivist-collaborative approach" (p. 1256), because it includes elements of an ongoing inquiry, respects personal experience, and emphasizes the role of knowledge creation in coming to know about our research and practice.

However, throughout our inquiry, we turned self-study on itself (Pinnegar et al., 2010) as we explored our question: What is Indigenously understood/informed self-study? As a result, many of the self-study methods familiar to us and commonly reflected in the research literature shifted. Through our conversations, our methods became increasingly informed by Indigenous ways of knowing that include wholistic methods of visioning, observing, witnessing, participating,

creating, storytelling, and sharing (Cajete, 1994; Davidson & Davidson, 2016; Wilson, 2008). By orienting our learning within a wholistic method yet grounding it in the study of 'self-in-practice, we bring together or braid (Sivia et al., 2021) our stories through collaborative conversations about our teaching experiences and our own navigations of Indigeneity, Indigenization, and decolonization. The "polyvocality" (Pitthouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015) of this collaborative research centres on the diverse voices, reflections, and experiences of each researcher while seeing strength in the "power of the we" (p. 1).

Living our Inquiry

We drew insights from personal stories, written reflections, conversations (recorded and transcribed or otherwise documented), and scholarship. The reflections served to capture moments in the diverse and varied landscapes and amorphous terrain of our conversations, at times surfacing concerns, tensions, questions, and insights about 'doing' research. Through Two-Eyed Seeing, we wove our ways of knowing and being (Edge et al., 2021) together through our diverse stories, understandings, and the scholarship of others. We shared the synergies, points of convergence, and distinctions that emerged in subsequent meetings and took notes in response. In the second year of our study, we looked back at the whole of our work and began tracking our coming-to-know processes (Pinnegar, 2011).

Integral to self-study research is the role of critical friendship (Loughran & Northfield, 1998). Schuck and Russel (2005) describe critical friends as those who provide another perspective beyond our own on our practice, facilitate the co-construction of knowledge, and challenge beliefs, so we can take risks to transform our practice. While we attended to our inner and outer arcs of attention (Marshall, 2001), noticing our own perceptions, and framing as teacher educators, as well as reaching outside of ourselves to explore nuances of difference that augmented our understanding, the practice of 'critical friendship' morphed as it came into contact with Indigenous worldviews. In our work, it manifested as what we refer to as 'alongside' storied experiences, that led to profound acts of witnessing which we explore later in our paper.

In terms of trustworthiness, our process is disciplined, even though our coming to know is itself fluid and organic. When one author shared that self-study has a way of 'tracking' (Kelly, 2013)—getting to know your footprints as you walk the path, — another author connected this to 'knowing the bear means you must be the bear and see the world from those eyes.' 'Tracking' of practice is done from an Indigenous perspective, the pathway for research can change in response and in relation to the environments, events, and contextual elements around us (Kelly, 2010). Thus, our conversations transformed from stories of teaching and researching, to recording meetings where we discussed responses to each other's insights, to our own reflections on the complexities of collaborative study.

In sharing our learning, we again honoured a Two-Eyed Seeing approach (Bartlett et al., 2012), providing both metaphoric imageries conveying meaning that is contextualized within wholistic structures (Cajete, 1995), as well as propositional and analytical writing more consistent with Western scholarship. Within our group, there was a noted difference in our practices of theorizing in this regard. As Simpson (2014) explains, within Indigenous knowledge systems, meaning "is derived not through content or data, or even theory in a Western context, which by nature is decontextualized knowledge, but through a compassionate web of interdependent relationships that are different and valuable because of that difference" (p. 11). We did this through sharing stories and thinking through a storied landscape.

Although we all carry distinct perspectives, our ideas harmonized around particular themes through asking questions, providing examples, sharing stories, reading quotes, or creating connections. This learning is represented thematically, the sharing occurring over multiple sessions as we engaged in iterative cycles of inquiry. As guided by Vicki, we also tried to preserve the individual contributions as much as possible through 'braiding;' our descriptions were intended to honour and acknowledge the contributions of each person, and resist writing in a unified voice.

Throughout our two-year study, representing our knowledge was a challenge as the rich ideas and experiences that all five members brought to the table shifted our thinking, understandings, and practices as a group, on a regular basis. As our coming-to-know is embedded within our relationships, which were constantly evolving, so was our collective knowledge. One draft would lead to another and yet another, stabilizing our shared understandings, but only temporarily. As a living inquiry (Meyer, 2010), we have experienced that the value of our work is as much in the process of coming to know as the production of knowledge in and of itself. This draft does not reflect an endpoint but a pause in our thinking—an offering forward of what we have come to understand as grounding ideas that are reoccurring in our work.

The *un*-boxing of Self-Study

Based on our experiences, self-study can serve as an organizing force, at times akin to a bounded container or box. In actuality, the 'box' of self-study is permeable. It reminds Kau'i of the Coast Salish cedar baskets she has witnessed being used for steaming shellfish, which have both flexibility and strength allowing a flow that can affect and alter what is held inside[2]. Similarly, self-study methodologies allow for a flow between the inner and outer realms of knowing. This image of the basket required us to understand the constant hermeneutic process of knowledge extending outward and returning to the core of knowing having been transformed. This ultimately reshapes self-study as a research methodology and situates it within a worldview that can be porous to other worldviews, epistemologies, and ontologies. It also means that we see how flow, space, time, place, and energy work on our knowing.

Figure 1

Coast Salish Cedar Basket

Note. Coast Salish Squamish Valley cedar basket, woven by cedar harvester and weaver Joy Joseph-McCollough, 2021. Photo shared by the artist.

[2] Also see https://www.whatcommuseum.org/virtual_exhibit/universal_exhibit/vex19/index.htm

We grew and nurtured our knowledge of research out of this energetic flow and generated learning about self-study that invited Indigenous knowledge systems to flow through our 'basket' of knowing, transforming self-study in interesting and provocative ways. The woven basket also reminded us to organize, explore, and extend our findings, through weaving. Weaving is a traditional practice across all of the authors' ancestral communities, Métis, Anishinaabe, Kanaka Maoli (Hawaiian) Finnish, Scottish, and South Asian. Further, Métis scholarship (Donald, 2012; Kelly, 2021a; Markides, 2018) establishes weaving practices as a way of knowing, doing, and being. We wove together common guiding principles of self-study research (LaBoskey, 2004; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009), and common principles of Indigenous/ist research (Blackstock, 2011, 2019; Wilson, 2001, 2007, 2008) as we interlaced our own alongside stories that we had shared as teacher-educators working on Indigenous Lands. Through this work, we generated five interweavings, which contribute to our understanding of an Indigenously-informed/understood self-study.

Interweaving 1: Expanded Notion of Self

Figure 2

Being in Synergistic Relationships

Note. Being in relation radically changes the Western self. Photo of Cher's children and friends shared with permission.

Being in synergistic relationships is where we center our work. We see differently with our eyes, with our hands, with our hearts, with our spirits. This weaving of relationality or being in relation radically changes the understanding of self in relation to S-STEP research. This lifts the lid off self-study and changes it significantly. Within self-study research, the self is seen in relation to practice. Who we are as educators is transformed by the practice we are engaged in since, as Pinnegar and Hamilton (2011) suggest, knowledge lives in the spaces between the researcher and the researched. This view of the self from within the Western paradigm of self-study research, however, is typically understood as relatively stable, bounded, and independent, and it does not fully acknowledge the temporal fluidity, the collective self, or the one being-ness (see below) inherent within Indigenous and other cultures.

Viewed through Indigenous lenses, understandings of the self are far more expansive across time and space than what is typically explored within self-study research, exceeding a single

embodied individual as well as one lifespan (Blackstock, 2019). Exploring the 'expanded self' or the self within a web of relations can be a much more generative and comprehensive process as informed by Indigenous knowledge systems. As Kau'i shared:

> My interactions are not bounded by self. I have become conscious that I am not doing this by myself and there are others with me. My Indigenous self cannot negate that I am still in relationship with others here, from the past and those who will come after me. Self is informed by everything including the ancestors and the more than human. I am travelling with others. (Kau'i, Meeting Notes)

Here, self is understood across time, involving cherished and sacred knowledge of ancestors and predecessors that flow forward and backward through DNA, as well as through cultural stories, songs, and artifacts. Vicki's scholarship further informs self-study research by describing the sacred and interconnected nature of our becoming in the world. She writes,

> Indigenous epistemologies acknowledge the individual journey of lifelong learning as a pathway, a sacred way of moving toward completeness or fully becoming one's potential. Through our journey toward wholeness, we are gifting our essence to the multitude of unique essences, which make up our world. This profound reciprocal sense that "We are all related, we are All related, we are all Related" is central to Indigenous ways of knowing, being and participating in the world. (Kelly, 2010, p. 83)

Through Vicki's scholarship, we understand our work as self-study researchers as attending to the resonances with and within our relations (Kelly, 2021). Cher, for example, shared a story of witnessing a car accident in which a deer was gravely injured. Informed by what she was learning about Indigenist worldviews, Cher responded differently than she might have done otherwise. She sat with the injured deer singing a song from this Land, comforted the driver, and worked relationally to contact the local Nation to properly honour and harvest the deer, which seemed unlikely to survive. This experience felt sacred and was profoundly pedagogical for Cher. She was aware of herself in relation to and as a part of, place, and others. This awareness determined the responses that followed and how these actions reverberated through the greater whole.

As Vicki explained during our conversations, from an Indigenous perspective, the self is wholistically understood as an extended way of being, the self is a verb rather than a noun. Self-study, in this regard, involves questioning what was your 'self' in that moment and developing a highly evolved presence of being. Interestingly, Awneet shared that in Punjabi, her ancestral language, there is no word for self. Instead, there is a word for community and togetherness (Sangat), a word for one-ness and one beingness (Ek Onkar), and a word for the collective light that is in each of us and the energetic resonances that everyone has with being in the world (Jhot). At this moment, Two-Eyed Seeing gave way to multi-eyed seeing (Kelly, 2022), further expanding our understanding of the practice of self-study. Paula added that the etymology of the word 'study' comes from, 'to strive toward, devote oneself to, to cultivate' (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.), which further resonated with our group. We shared with one another sacred moments of 'oneness we had experienced in our teaching and research that were so profound, that we felt them 'in our bones,' and considered how we contribute to pathways that enable such conditions. As Paula mentioned, 'Self-study is who you are, your being, not something you do. It is a becoming of who we are meant to be, living the work, and journeying with others. In finding that alignment, we flourish'.

Interweaving 2: Alongside Collaborations

Figure 3

Cedar Boughs, S'olh Temexw, Stó:lō Territory, 2020

Note. This image is a reminder of the jagged edges between my identity as an immigrant settler and the Indigenous land on which I journey. The cedar boughs reach out and call me in as I walk alongside others to learn wise ways and ancestral teachings. In this journey, I strive to form relationships that support me to grow. Photo taken by Awneet shared with permission.

Foundational to self-study inquiry is the ability to step outside our unconscious frames of reference and work collaboratively with others who can challenge, disrupt, and extend our perspectives (LaBoskey, 2004). As previously discussed, often this is accomplished through critical friendships. Indigenous scholarship invites us into more wholistic models of collaboration where multiple perspectives can co-exist (Armstrong, 2013; Martin et al., 2020; Wilson, 2008). As Wilson (2008) explains,

> Say you have a fire, and you have people sitting in a circle around the fire. And you ask any person to describe the fire. While they are describing it, and you are looking at the same fire, it's not the same thing. But that doesn't mean they are wrong. They are at a different vantage point altogether. So, we say, if we share this information in the circle, we share this experience, the collective experience; we will get a bigger picture. (Wilson, 2008, p. 112)

Wilson's (2008) story of the fire moves us beyond critical collaborations to wholistic engagement with multiple perspectives, each of which is respected in their own right, to ground our exploration of practice fundamentally within a place of multiplicities of practice. Kau'i made a connection between Wilson's (2008) story and a mo'olelo, story, from her Hawaiian culture about the entity with eight different eyes, reminding people about the different ways of seeing that are embodied into one. As Simpson (2014) explains, individuals carry the responsibility for their own interpretations and qualify them in relation to their own lived experiences within their specific contexts. She states, "This is deliberate, ethical, and profoundly careful, within Nishnaabewin because to do otherwise is considered arrogant and intrusive with the potential to interfere with other beings' life pathways" (Simpson, 2014, p. 11).

Our practice of sharing what Awneet referred to as "alongside storied experiences" is consistent with these principles. These stories were offered up to the group, not to critique or interrogate, but as lived experiences with their teachings and learnings that created resonance and interweavings as we grew in our understanding of self-study research and Indigenous ways of knowing. These stories were received in all their complexity and understood within a relational context. A key aspect of the sharing of alongside stories is what Vicki 3 refers to as "witnessing" and Simpson (2017) would call "reciprocal recognition." As Vicki explained, we spoke our truth and were received as speaking our truth. In attending to the stories we received with reverence, we lifted each other in the moment, acknowledging the dignity of each one of us, leading to greater awareness and profound insights, about our practice as educators.

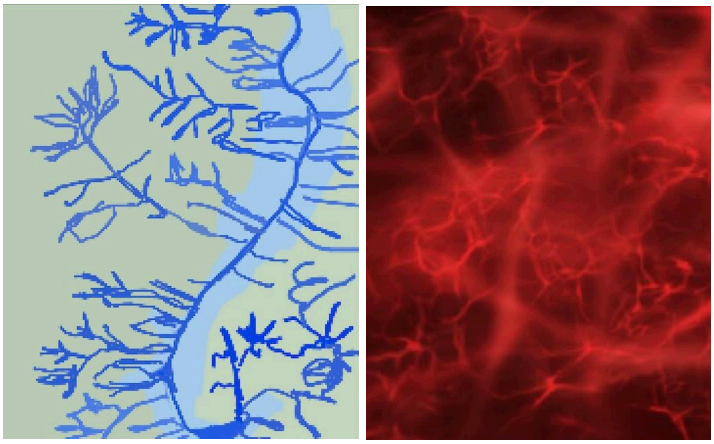
Sharing alongside stories, as opposed to critical feedback, felt like a powerful pedagogical as well as methodological practice founded on deep respect and reciprocity. As Kau'i described: "It was the relationships in this circle, as people who knew each other in friendship, that enabled a good way of developing a grounding and sharing an offering. We all were all guiding and supporting and being supported and guided." For Kau'i, a Kanaka Maoli scholar, participating in this process activated understandings about being an Indigenous person and the work that she would need to do on her 'colonized self.' For Awneet, as a woman-of-colour-immigrant-settler, the more she learned about diverse Indigenous worldviews through alongside stories, the better she could understand similar practices in her own culture.

Indigenously understood self-study prompts researchers to consider who is present in our collaborations and who is absent. Wilson (2008), for example, contends that Indigenist research should unfold within the community and be supported by the Elders (see Wilson, 2007). This is consistent with Paula and Vicki's process to envision their graduate diploma program, *Indigenous Education: Education for Reconciliation* (see SFU News, 2017). They worked collaboratively with a curriculum council comprised of representatives from the host Nations, səl̓ilw̓ətaʔɬ and sḵwx̱wú7mesh, and the North Vancouver School District, to co-imagine and co-create a graduate program for practicing teachers that would advance the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action* and Reconciliation through Indigenous education (Kelly et al., 2021). This program "acknowledged the ongoing invitation from the local Indigenous Communities that we all learn what it means to live on this land and walk with Indigenous people as they journey towards Indigenous Resurgence" (Kelly, 2021, p. 206).

Interweaving 3: Self-study in Service of Community

Figure 4

Web of Water and Life



Note. The streams that run through our watershed and the veins that run through our bodies – we are all connected in the web of water and life. We have a responsibility to care for the Land, for each other and ourselves. As I inquire into my practice as an educator, I think about how learning serves communities and the worlds in which we inhabit, as well as the students. I have moved our learning outside and into neighbourhoods, and a large part of our pedagogy involves caring for our more-than-human teachers and the communities and places that sustain us in this work. Images by Cher's daughter, Mia McTavish.

Inherent within the goals of the self-study research is to deepen and complexify our understanding of ourselves and practice to positively impact student learning (Samaras, 2012). While there is an ethical obligation for self-study researchers to apply their learning to enhance practice (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2014) and an assumption that they are agents of change (LaBoskey, 2004), these principles are heightened and extended when informed by Indigenous scholarship. As Wilson (2008) asserts, Indigenous research aims to "improve the reality of the people you are working with" (p. 115). During our conversations, Vicki shared how Indigenous research is enacted to be of service to others in the here and now. She stated, "An Indigenous Worldview and axiology are relational and within Indigenous relational accountability; this means we are accountable to All Our Relations" (meeting notes).

Blackstock's (2011) model was educative to us in this regard, clarifying how understandings of human development are restricted by the Western notion of the individuated self. As Blackstock (2011) explains, Maslow's theory borrowed heavily from the Blackfoot people, who understood self-actualization as actually the foundation, rather than the endpoint, of human development. Within this model, self-actualization is the base that supports community actualization, which in turn supports cultural perpetuity and the well-being of All Our Relations in the community. Understanding that S-STEP can be viewed as sacred work that serves our community that extends into the future to touch those who come after us, requires a shift, a morphing of self, from self as being the *object* of self-study research to seeing the intersubjectivities of self with place, pedagogy, and people. As Meyers (2008) asserts "See your work as a taonga (sacred object) for your family, your community, your people – because it is" (p. 219).

Informed by Indigenous perspectives, self-study research contributes to the flourishing of communities. As Opaskwayak Cree scholar Wilson (2007) suggests, "transformation within every living entity participating in the research will be one of the outcomes of every project" (p. 195). Kau'i shared, "Land is that which feeds us. In the Hawaiian language the word for Land is ʻāina and food is meaʻai. The Land and we as people have an interdependent relationship". In this regard, Cher's focus as an educator has extended beyond the learning of her students to include the well-being of the Salmon and of local communities and of being within a place. When Elders informed her MEd cohort about the dire conditions for Salmon in the Fraser River, the class worked collectively with members of the q̓íc̓əy̓ Nation, environmentalists, educators, and foresters to work towards restoring creeks to care for salmon, as well as community relations (see Hill, et al., 2021; 2023). She continues to embed this powerful participatory pedagogy within her teaching and explores other ways to provide her students with learning experiences that are in service of the community.

Interweaving 4: Self-study as Lifting Up the Learning Spirit

Figure 5

Coast Salish Drum Created in the Indigenous Education Graduate Diploma Program

Note. Education for Reconciliation, GDE. Bucky Baker, a Knowledge Holder from the Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nation gifted the teachers in the cohort with teachings on how to make a drum. Richard Wagamese (2016) teaches us that "when the drum beats it resonates beyond your body. It becomes the heartbeat of Creation as it was meant to be. To sing with it is to offer a blessing to all that is and to receive blessings back (p. 56). Singing and drumming were ceremonial pedagogies that were part of the opening and closing circle in all our Indigenous GDE classes and gatherings; Indigenous, wholistic practices that nurtured relationality, honoured the learning spirit, and attuned us all to our bodies, spirits, minds, and emotions; these practices rippled into the classrooms and served as ways in which flourishing was fostered. Photo taken by Paula and shared with permission.

Rooted in a moral imperative to ensure just outcomes, the self-study of practice aims to be emancipatory, improving teaching, learning, and schooling (Feldman, 2004). In this era of reconciliation, educators and scholars are called to action, to foster Indigenous wholistic pedagogical pathways that honour Indigenous cultures, perspectives, and practices (Abolson, 2010). Wholistic approaches to being, relating, and educating, honour the learning spirit, nurture relationality, expand aesthetic expression, and acknowledge multiple ways of knowing (Rosehart and Elke, 2022). To re-imagine educational environments that lift the learning spirit of all learners, and indeed to acknowledge the gifts within us as people, educators, and scholars, we need to centre Indigeneity as a re-humanizing and re-spiriting axiology (Battiste, 2010). This requires us, as self-study researchers to do our inner work of "unearthing salient issues about which we care about" (Tanaka, 2015, p. 70). In responding to the call to be of service, we are responsible for using our power and privilege to resist "ingrained patterns of Eurocentric education" (Tanaka, 2015, p. 69) and to foreground Indigenous wisdom that honours all our relations (Wagamese, 2016). As we engage in this re-imagining of self-study as reciprocal relationality, we are embarking upon a journey of finding face (identity), finding heart (passion), and finding foundation (vocation) (Cajete, 1994) both for ourselves and those in our pedagogical care:

> We have to facilitate our children and ourselves in that ancient journey to find our face (to understand and appreciate our true character), to find our heart (to understand and appreciate the passions that move and energize our life), to find a foundation (work that allows us to fully express our potential and our greatest fulfillment), and to become a complete man or woman (to find our Life and appreciate the spirit that moves us). (Cajete, 1994, p. 68)

Within self-study inquiry, there is an implicit assumption that teachers mediate learning and that through advancing our pedagogical practice we can initiate improvements and changes in learning. Extending from this, teacher knowledge and positional power can be centred. This is a colonial view that serves to distance and even marginalize students from the sacred and spirit-driven learning that Battiste (2010) describes:

> What guides our learning (beyond family, community, and Elders) is spirit, our own learning spirits who travel with us and guide us along our earth walk, offering us guidance, inspiration, and quiet unrealized potential to be who we are. (p. 15)

In our thinking, the 'spiriting' of self-study of practice in the service of community, involves a shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on the practice of learning. As Kau'i shared, in her Hawaiian language, there is one word for teaching and learning. Shifting the focus from teaching to learning decentres our role as teachers, and invites others into educative encounters, including the more-than-human and the non-corporeal, a reciprocal relationship. As Awneet wrote in her reflection, "Pedagogy does not belong to a person, it's a way of interacting and relating in the world. People teach us, place teaches us."

Incorporating trauma-informed pedagogies within our teaching, can also serve to re-humanize and re/centre human 'being' and fragility in our practice as educators. We have noticed how such pedagogies are strangely absent in our schools despite provincial and national goals to heal the wounds caused by the residential school system. Teachers in our province have a responsibility to educate students about the ugly history of residential schools (see Milloy, 1999), as well as the ongoing impact of intergenerational trauma (Truth and Reconciliation Commission,

2015). Knowing that Indigenous (and other students) may carry trauma as a result of colonial violence and oppression, however, requires something more of us as educators.

During our conversations, one of us shared a traumatizing experience for some preservice teachers when they visited a residential school and entered what was a graveyard. Those who entered the graveyard may not have understood the harm of their actions. We are learning how the normalization of colonial genocide on these Lands serves to wrap settler teachers and students in a blanket of privilege which does not prepare them/us to do the "hard soul work" (Wilson & Nelson-Moody, 2019), which is required to create accountable spaces (Ahenkorah, 2020) for all students as learners. This begs the question: How might self-study research, in the ways we are suggesting, be mobilized to re-envision schools as wholistic sites of healing (Absolon, 2010), where all children's learning spirits (Battiste, 2010, 2013; Battiste & Henderson, 2009) are nurtured and communities share responsibility for the hard soul work (Wilson & Nelson-Moody, 2019)?

Interweaving 5: Coming-to-Know

Figure 6

The Hokule'a

Note. Mau Piailug, a Satawal master navigator, trained from age five in the ancient traditional knowledge of wayfinding was asked to navigate the Hokule'a, a deep-sea voyaging canoe on its first voyage from Hawaii to Tahiti in 1976. This was a voyage that had not been done in 600 years on a pathway that Mau had never navigated. As the master navigator Mau relied on the ancient knowledge of wayfinding for which he trained, and he also held the responsibility for the canoe and the crew. He observed and brought together deep knowledge and practical information about the rising and setting of stars, the movement of the sun and clouds, wind and swell, fish, and birds. Mau, as a recognized master navigator, demonstrated rigour through the application of ancient traditional knowledge, and in his responsibility to the canoe and the crew and in turn the community. Photo by Kau'i of the Hokule'a after a worldwide voyage in 2017.

Self-study inquiry contributes to both personal and community knowledge (Samaras, 2012), and yet it is as much an ontological endeavour as an epistemological one. As Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) assert "The basic question is actually more about *what is* than about claims to

know" (p. 2). The knowledge that is produced within self-study research is typically understood as specific to particular contexts and inseparable from the knower (Bullock, 2011; Pitthouse-Morgan & Samaras, 2015). Here we feel a strong resonance between self-study and Indigenous methodologies, as compared to other Western research traditions. Within Indigenous methodologies, however, knowledge is situated not only within specific contexts but within webs of relationality (Donald, 2009, 2012; Wilson, 2008), and as Vicki shared, knowledge is distributed across beings. Coming-to-know is a continual process that is constantly shifting as our relational fields change. When we find ourselves in different relationships with each other, with Land, with places and spaces, it changes how we come to know, what we know and calls into question that which we presume to know in the first place. This differs from assumptions that through S-STEP research, practice will "evolve and develop in increasingly sophisticated ways" (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 48).

We have come to an understanding that through self-study inquiry, practice will become more responsive to place and networks of relationships. Indeed, our own coming-to-know within this group unfolded, re-turned, free fell, and snowballed in different ways as our relational context shifted from in-person to online during the pandemic, as seasons changed and our lives cycled, as the bodies of children were and are being found in unmarked graves at the sites of former Residential Schools, and as the effects of colonial roots of climate change, from biospheric and societal stressors to heat domes, fires, and floods, decimate the Land. When we understand self in relation, then place is profoundly impactful to the study or inquiry into self; it is no longer understood as separate from the web of life in which it is embedded.

Through Indigenous knowledge systems our practices of validity or quality as S-STEP researchers are expanded beyond the common criteria of methodological systematicity, significance, impact, transparency, and triangulation (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Feldman, 2004; LaBoskey, 2004). Here, self-study is shifted to a deep and expansive understanding of interrelated systems. As Kau'i explained, from an Indigenous perspective "systematic observation involves an embodied sensibility, a watchfulness, and a breathing into life systems … that enables you to be able to see a lot more than what is in front of you" (meeting notes). She referenced the interdependent connections and respectful relationships between people and the more-than-human and described how changes in one aspect of ecosystems impact other aspects of systems, such as the Salmon that swim through connected watersheds. When we asked Kau'i where "rigour" lives within Indigenous research, her response was, "within responsibility." She shared:

> Pilau was the navigator in charge of the canoe during the first voyage from Hawaii to Tahiti. He held the responsibility for the canoe and all the lives in it. That required rigour in attending to all aspects of nature on his part. His bum was on the bottom of the canoe so he could feel the currents. Rigour is required when you reach that level of responsibility. It comes from the doing and the responsibility for the doing.

As we discussed, our sense of responsibility as researchers is deepened within Indigenous traditions as we must carefully examine what knowledge is worth seeking, what part of reality is worth learning more about, and what our reciprocal responsibility is, to the community moving forward.

Closing: Our 'Alongside' Stories, Relational-Knowing and Multi-Eyed Seeing

As evident through our inquiry, the richness of relationality, respect, wholism, resonance, and responsibility embedded in Indigenous worldviews can enhance Western scholarship. The process

of collaborating through self-study involves honouring our collective affinities within communities of sharing and acknowledging the role of walking alongside and witnessing one another. We have come to understand that self-study methodologies and how we understand Indigenous inquiry share resonances, and yet, reveal a profoundly different understanding of self. We named these interweavings as expanded notions of self, alongside collaborations, self-study as service of the community, lifting the learning spirit, and coming-to-know. Indeed, Indigenous worldviews evoke an expansion of Western notions of the self that extend to the more than human, the land, and the ancestors (Donald, 2009) through connection to place, community, as well as past, present, and future generations. Indigenously understood self-study methodologies therefore shift our thinking about ethical relationality, in which we come to view our work as a sacred practice that serves our community and extends into the future, to touch those who come after us. This invites a shift from the Western understanding of the self as the *object* of self-study research to seeing the self in relation and *as* relation, intersubjectively, with place, pedagogy, and people. Further, we suggest an inextricable connectedness to place because place forms our orientation and ways of knowing, which correspondingly informs how we teach and how we engage in research.

Our inquiry also contributes to the methodology of self-study research and reminds teacher educators of "Two-Eyed Seeing" (Bartlett et al., 2012) as a knowing that honours Indigenous and Western worldviews and can lead to multi-eyed seeing (Kelly, 2021).

> Seeing with many eyes acknowledges the ways of knowing, the multiple perspectives, and the strengths of Indigenous, Western, Asian, and other cultures. It also acknowledges the need for integrative, transcultural, transdisciplinary, and collaborative work within educational praxis. (Kelly, 2013, p. 23)

Our work serves to expand on discourses and practices regarding multiple ways of knowing, and the cultivation of the relational self, self that is attuned to/with people and place.

On a personal level, this self-study has created a space for us to express and explore our yearnings, including a longing for us as educators, to 'lift up' our students as well as our own learning spirits, and attend to the repairing of colonial harm, to people and Land. Experiencing the transformation of how we understand ourselves and how we stand in relation to our praxis as educators was deeply healing for us as a community of educators. This work grounded us and carried us through the pandemic, health, and family crises, as well as profound loss. Through the sharing of our alongside stories and witnessing those of others, by 'seeing' our work through Indigenous and many 'eyes,' we experienced ourselves-in-relation, as we became part of the community, a family, and part of each other's stories.

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