Engaging New Brunswick First Nations in Research
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ENGAGING NEW BRUNSWICK FIRST NATIONS IN RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

We are exploring ways to engage First Nation communities in New Brunswick in collaborative research projects and RICTA, a new Canadian network of research on ICT (information and communication technologies) with Aboriginal communities. The paper includes an overview of literature about Indigenous research. We start with Mihesuah's (1993) guidelines in this area as a reference to developing our own starting point towards methodologies for the specific cultural, geographic, socio-economic and political realities of First Nations in New Brunswick.

INTRODUCTION

RICTA – Research on ICT with Aboriginal Communities – is a new national cluster of researchers working on ICT research with Aboriginal communities in Canada. As researchers connected with RICTA, we see opportunities for First Nations in New Brunswick to get involved with research on a range of ICT issues – such as ICT and education, ICT and health, ICT and economic development, ICT and culture and language, and ICT and governance and citizen engagement. This article grew from the recognition that to develop collaborative research projects – involving researchers based in academic and government research institutions and First Nations community representatives and community-based researchers – we needed to start by developing some methodologies for moving forward. We wanted to challenge the traditional ways of doing research with First Nations by attempting to decolonize research and shift to a new research paradigm of mutual respect.

NEW BRUNSWICK FIRST NATIONS

There are fifteen First Nation communities in the province of New Brunswick, with two distinct Native affiliations which are the Maliseet and Mi'kmaq. The six Maliseet

Nation communities are located along the St. John River or Wolastoq in the Maliseet language, which passes through the province of New Brunswick. This river has traditionally been the main source of survival for the Maliseet people who are traditionally called Wolastoqewiyik meaning "people of the River" in Maliseet. Traditional campsites were located along the river and eventually became settlement communities for the Maliseet people during time of European contact and the development of the reservation system by the colonial government.

The Mi'kmaq Nation communities in New Brunswick are largely located along the coastal regions of the province and have lived traditionally off the ocean's abundant food source within and along the coastal waters.

Overall both Native groups were nomadic peoples that moved around the traditional territory for hunting, fishing and gathering of food supplies and still continue to hold strong ties with this livelihood which we consider our inherent rights as First Peoples of this land and is supported by the "Peace and Friendship Treaty" with the crown.

INTRODUCTION TO CONDUCTING RESEARCH ON FIRST NATION ISSUES

During the past decade there has been a shift in how researchers approach research relating to First Nations. A new research paradigm is emerging in which First Nations are more actively involved in developing and conducting research.

Among the earliest indications of this paradigm shift are guidelines developed by Devon Mihesuah, an American scholar and member of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma. Her "guidelines for institutions with scholars who conduct research on American Indians" (Mihesuah, 1993) were developed in response to the fact that most researchers use their data collected from American Indians for their own gain – for tenure, promotion, grants, marketability and prestige – while giving nothing in return to their subjects of study, and that others assume paternalistic approaches to this research. Many of Mihesuah's 10 guidelines are still relevant today:

- Only the tribes/ elected political and religious leadership should review and approve the research proposal

- Research should remain sensitive to the economic, social, physical, psychological, religious, and general welfare of the individuals and cultures being studied

- Researchers who are preparing grant applications that deal with Indians should be prepared to spend months, if not a year, to allow the subjects to thoroughly understand every aspect of the study

- Reseachers should use caution when using cameras and tape recorders

- Informants should be given fair and appropriate return

- The anticipated consequences of the research should be communicated to individuals and groups that will be affected

- Every attempt should be made to cooperate with the current host society

- Physical anthropologists, archaeologists, and other researchers wishing to desecrate Indian burials in order to study remains and funerary objects should obtain permission to do so from tribes

- Results of the study should be reviewed by the tribes/ elected representatives and religious leaders

- Researchers must follow the guidelines for each new project

A follow up to Mihesuah's research guidelines was her book with contributions from First Nation scholars, primarily from the United States, which focused on researching First Nation people, their culture and history (Mihesuah, 1998a). Many of the First Nation authors (Wilson, 1998; Mihesuah, 1998b; Deloria, 1998; Fixico, 1998; Miller, 1998; Whitt, 1998; Swisher, 1998) brought attention to the limitations they noted

largely in the area of history research and writing about First Nations by scholars who were non-First Nation.

The field of history has not been the only discipline viewed as challenging and problematic in its research, writing and portrayal of First Nation people. Many First Nation groups as well as some of the First Nation scholars who contributed to Mihesuah's book have commented and written about such issues found within many of the academic fields and other areas. Anthropology, education, the new field of Native Studies as well as literature, media and movies have their share of limitations, negative imagery and inaccuracies in the research, writing and portrayal of First Nation people, as shown by First Nations scholars (Wilson, 1998a; Allen, 1998; Cook-Lynn, 1998; Whitt, 1998; Champagne, 1998; Swisher, 1998). Contributions from the authors in this book have provided significant insight into the many challenges that First Nation people and First Nation scholars are addressing in the United States in the area of researching and writing about First Nations.

Decolonizing Methodologies by Tuhiwai Smith is another text addressing the western research paradigm and its application to Indigenous groups universally. The focus of this book "identifies research as a significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999:2). It challenges the current western paradigm of research and shifts to Indigenous people and Indigenous researchers setting the parameters and priorities of the research, its ethics, responsibilities and methodology. It further provides an avenue "to address social issues within the wider framework of self-determination, decolonization and social justice" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999:4). As well, it provides a means in which research can be placed and analyzed within a broader "historical, political and cultural" context or perspective (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999).

In Canada, First Nations and the research community have likewise been developing their understanding of how research on Aboriginal issues should be conducted. The Association of Canadian Universities for Northern Studies published ethical principles for the conduct of research in the North in 1982, and the Inuit Circumpolar conference published principles and elements for a comprehensive Arctic policy in 1991. In 1993, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) – the largest inquiry to date on

the situation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada - published ethical guidelines for research. In 1996, guidelines for entry into an Aboriginal community were developed for community health and nursing researchers working with Dene communities (Kowalsky, Thurston, Verhoef and Rutherford, 1996) and the Canadian Archaelogical Association published a statement of principles for ethical conduct pertaining to Aboriginal peoples (CAA, 1996). In 2002, the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College (now the First Nations University of Canada) published a brief that highlighted the characteristics of this new paradigm.

In 2003, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) – one of the primary funders of research on First Nation issues - published the results of its "Dialogue on Research and Aboriginal Peoples." The SSHRC consultation is important because it was the largest consultation to date in Canada about social sciences and humanities research on Aboriginal issues (McNaughton and Rock, 2003). The report discussed the new research paradigm that is evolving and outlined how SSHRC could initiate programs in Aboriginal research.

Currently, the two most significant documents or approaches guiding research on Aboriginal issues in Canada are the Tri-Council policy on ethical conduct for research involving humans (1997), Section 6, and the analysis of OCAP – ownership, control, access and possession or self-determination applied to research (Schnarch, 2004). The Tri-Council policy was developed by the three Canadian government funding councils for research: SSHRC, NSERC, and CIHR. The policy is significant because every Canadian researcher intending to collect data on humans must have their research plans subjected to review by research ethics boards (REBs). REBs use the Tri-Council policy to assess the research plans decide whether the research can go ahead and how the plans should be modified. Section 6 of the Tri-Council policy, Research Involving Aboriginal Peoples, is not a well-developed policy or theory but rather a brief introduction followed by a short bullet-point list of good practices that researchers should consider. Section 6 is currently being revised to reflect a more developed understanding of the ethical considerations involved in doing Aboriginal research in Canada.

The second approach – OCAP - is significant because it is the first theory developed by First Nations in Canada about how research on First Nations should be conducted.

OCAP, a response to the role of knowledge production in reproducing colonial relations, "has become a rallying cry to many First Nations and should be a wake-up call for researchers" (Schnarch, 2004). From a First Nations perspective, the benefits of OCAP include rebuilding trust, improving research quality and relevance, decreasing bias, and developing capacity and empowerment to make change in First Nations.

TOWARDS A METHODOLOGY FOR ENGAGING NEW BRUNSWICK FIRST NATIONS IN RESEARCH

The literature introduced above is guiding our thinking about a methodology for engaging New Brunswick First Nations in ICT research. The discussion that follows is our starting point for how we intend to approach this research. Although the province of New Brunswick is the focus of our current thinking, this methodology may also be relevant for Indigenous peoples or communities across Canada and internationally. Given that this is our starting point, we expect that our methodology will develop and expand in the future. The five themes discussed below can be considered the foundation for developing any research project involving First Nations.

Building a relationship, partnerships and collaborations with First Nations

A relationship based on mutual trust and respect will require a new research paradigm in which First Nations and researchers are partners, sharing power so there can be true collaboration between equals.

Wilson (1998a) encourages the building of relationships and trust between non-First Nation researchers and First Nation people which will benefit both parties in that the First Nation people will have the opportunity provide their perspective and the researcher will have the approval of the First Nation community. She notes however, that the researcher needs to understand that relationship building is a lengthy process and may take extensive involvement of the researcher to understand the dynamics of the community and be accepted by the people. Wilson stresses the need for more collaboration between non-First Nation researchers and the First Nation people regarding their history for a more balanced representation, interpretation and portrayal

of their history. This, she suggests, can be in many different forms from building relationships with some of the First Nation people being researched, talking to elders in order to gain better understanding of information and its accuracy, as well giving the First Nation people the opportunity to comment on the research and writing as it is being developed.

Fixico (1998) stresses the importance of developing ethics and responsibility in the research, writing and teaching of First Nation history. This will help to ensure sensitivity to the information provided as well as how it is written, and it will provide an opportunity for First Nation perspectives or accounts of their history. Further, building a trusting and respectful relationship with First Nation people is crucial to the development of ethical guidelines and responsibilities in First Nation history research.

The Tri-Council policy (1997), Section 6 notes that researchers have not always conducted research with Aboriginal communities in a respectful way. The policy recommends that researchers involved with Aboriginal communities: conceptualize and conduct research with Aboriginal groups as a partnership; consult members of the group who have relevant expertise; involve the group in the design of the project; provide the group with information about protection of the group's cultural estate and other property, the availability of a preliminary report for comment, the potential employment by researchers of community members, researchers' willingness to cooperate with community institutions, and to deposit data, working papers and related materials in an agreed-upon repository; acknowledge in the publication of the research results the various viewpoints of the community on the topics researched; and afford the community an opportunity to react and respond to the research findings before the completion of the final report, in the final report or even in all relevant publications.

The SSHRC report (McNaughton and Rock, 1993) underlines the importance of equity as a common denominator. It highlights the paradigm shift occurring in how Aboriginal research is understood. Partnerships is a key theme. Several models of partnership are proposed, including an extension of a peer-review system with Aboriginal educators and community members reviewing and recommending applications for funding by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people doing research on Aboriginal issues. Another model is a partnership of joint exploration, using the Gus-wen-tah or Two Row

Wampum treaty for Haudenosaunee and European relations. The SSHRC report highlights one of the main challenges facing partnerships: ensuring that enough time and resources are provided to allow Aboriginal systems of knowledge to develop stronger footing.

Schnarch (2004) goes much further, describing many instances of researchers not building relationships with First Nations. In response, many Aboriginal community members are saying "we've been researched to death." The OCAP approach instead encourages First Nations to refuse to work with researchers who do not respect the ability of communities to do their own research. OCAP suggests that First Nations contract, rather than partner with, researchers. "The contract involves the purchase of services and makes clear the lines of accountability." OCAP - ownership, control, access and possession – principles state that First Nation communities own information collectively, that First Nations have a right to control all aspects of research and information management of a research project from inception to completion, that First Nations must have access to information and data about themselves no matter where it is held, and that First Nations can assert and protect ownership of data.

Developing First Nations' priorities for research

In the old research paradigm, Non-First Nation, institutional researchers have set the priorities and boundaries for research. First Nations' priorities have not been heard or respected. First Nations researchers and their contributions have not been valued. Developing First Nations' priorities for research includes respect and recognition of existing priorities and First Nations researchers. However it goes further than this to include developing research methodologies that encourage First Nations to articulate their own research agenda.

Mihesuah (1998) states that although there has been progress in the writing and researching of First Nation people including First Nation women by non-First Nation scholars, there still remains inaccuracies and lack of First Nation representation. By not utilizing First Nation voices and bridging the past with the present, non-First Nation scholars provide only one side to the history of First Nation people. Therefore, it is

important for First Nation people to "be writing history in the first place" (Mihesuah, 1998:37).

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) notes that Indigenous groups are now starting to get involved in rewriting their history and incorporate their perspectives into these accounts. "It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore spirit…" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999:28). This, she claims, is very different from the traditional Western approach to history research of First Nation history by non-First Nation researchers.

Swisher (1998) emphasizes the need for First Nation people to have the authority and control to carry out the research and writing regarding First Nation education. Despite the efforts of non-First nation researchers who use methods that try to capture the voice and perspectives of First Nations people, their research and writing is still from the perspective of the Western mainstream society. Often "what is missing is the passion from within and the authority to ask new and different questions based on histories and experiences as Indigenous people" (Swisher, 1998:193). The capacity of First Nation researchers is developing in many areas, and needs to be utilized. Swisher provides the example of the "National Dialogue Project on American Indian Education" which was developed and completed by First Nation people, with the report written by the First Nation staff and students of a Native Studies program. As well, other First Nation scholars have the capacity to conduct the research and writing which will provide the voice, sensitivity and holistic approach that is needed for accuracy in the perspective, portrayal and realities of First Nation people (Swisher, 1998). Further, "it is more than a different ways of knowing; it is knowing that what we think is grounded in principles of sovereignty and self-determination and that it has credibility" (Swisher, 1998:193).

Canada's Tri-Council policy (1997), Section 6 recommends that researchers involved with Aboriginal communities: examine how the research may be shaped to address the needs and concerns of the group; and make best efforts to ensure that the emphasis of the research, and the ways chosen to conduct it, respect the many viewpoints of different segments of the group.

The OCAP approach (Schnarch, 2004) prioritizes First Nations researchers and research by First Nations communities; there is little room for non-Aboriginal researchers in the OCAP model. OCAP insists on the right of First Nations to determine their research priorities independent of outside researchers.

Developing researchers' self-awareness of how their upbringing and education has shaped their cultural biases, motives and perspectives

All researchers need to be aware of their own biases and assumptions and their privileged position in society, and how that privilege contributes to unequal power relations among different groups and cultures in society. Historically, research and writing have contributed to the destruction of First Nations by writing them out of history or providing only one version of history. This has led to devaluating the knowledge and culture of First Nations and a loss of many of their traditional ways. In order to not perpetuate that imbalance of power, researchers working with First Nations need to examine their own place within these unequal power relations and question why they are conducting this kind of research.

The research and writing by non-First Nation scholars have been largely developed from a patriarchal or feminist perspective, which assess First Nation people from within their own white mainstream standards. First Nation people judged by these western standards do not reflect the complexity or reality of the First Nation people and their culture, as so much as the biases of the non-First Nation researchers (Mihesuah, 1998).

Whitt's (1998) article "Cultural Imperialism and the Marketing of Native America" has important implications for research and writing about First Nation people. The challenge of ownership and academic freedom for the information, research and copyright of aspects of First Nation culture, spirituality, arts, music and so on, has been debated and continues to be debated as more First Nation people are voicing disapproval over this exploitation and appropriation of their culture by non-First Nation people. Whitt explains this as cultural imperialism that "whether or not it is conscious and intentional, it serves to extend the political power, secure the social control, and further the economic profit of the dominant culture" (Whitt, 1998:140). This would be extended to the academic researcher and writers who use the argument of academic

freedom to seek knowledge and truth but also to ensure that the information collected and written about is copyrighted and used to enhance one's standing, promotion and position in the Western academic institutions. "They attempt to dictate the terms of the debate by focusing attention on issues of freedom of speech and thought and deflecting it from the active commercial exploitation and the historical realities of power that condition current dominant/indigenous relations" (Whitt, 1998: 146).

Although Champagne (1998) recognizes that both First Nation and non-First Nation scholars are entitled to study and research First Nation people, he does stress that often the non-First Nation scholar's reliance on Western standards, theories and analysis has led to incorrect interpretations in their research and writing, with little emphasis on the cultural aspects of the First Nation group despite its importance. The First Nation researcher may be more aware of specific issues that need research and analysis and have access to information and relationships with First Nations. However, being a First Nation researcher without the experience, skills and values that will insure sensitivity and accuracy to the research and writing of First Nation people is also not acceptable. He furthered emphasized the need for ethics and guidelines in the research and writing of First Nation people and noted that more First Nation groups are requesting some reciprocity for the information or access to information they provided. So, researchers should seek approval or inform the First Nation group of their research interest and if it is not acceptable to the First Nation community it should not proceed (Champagne, 1998).

First Nation scholars in the field of Native studies often have different perspectives and values than scholars in other academic disciplines and the contributions made through scholarly works and efforts in this field are not valued as with other disciplines. Since the First Nation scholars are few they have a minority voice in addressing their concerns if they are given a voice at all (Champagne, 1998).

Dabulkis-Hunter (2002) published a challenge to "outsider" researchers who research Native issues. Her study of how white writers "explore" Native issues, knowledge and experiences concluded that until non-Native researchers begin to examine their own privileges and the resulting assumptions made about who is the expert and who is the

object of study, Native people and communities will be harmed and cultural genocide will continue.

Integrating the political, socio-economic and historical contexts of the research

Any research topic involving First Nations – including ICT research – cannot be understood out of the historical context of First Nations and how history has led to the current political and socio-economic realities of First Nations today. The fact that First Nations experience power and resource imbalances compared to mainstream Canada – in education, health, economic development, language and culture and many other areas – is a direct result of the long history of exploitation of First Nations that has characterized Canadian society.

Although Mihesuah (1998) focuses primarily on First Nation women, she stresses the need to have a holistic approach in the development of First Nation history which involves bridging the past with the present as well as understanding the complexity of First Nation people, especially the women, from their own perspective.

Miller (1998) focuses on the research and writing approach of First Nation history by non-First Nation history scholars. The sources or accounts used in their research often consists of written documents developed by non-First Nation people with little consultation or collaboration and sometimes no contact with the First Nation group whose ancestors are written about. As a result, many First Nation people have challenged the accuracy of the information and the images of their ancestors in these published texts while at the same time non-First Nation history committees have awarded prizes for their works.

The Tri-Council policy (1997), Section 6 recommends that researchers involved with Aboriginal communities respect the culture, traditions and knowledge of the Aboriginal group.

Expanding the borders of the researchers' academic discipline, methodologies and theories

ENGAGING NEW BRUNSWICK FIRST NATIONS IN RESEARCH

One single approach to research with First Nations is not enough. In order to understand the complexity and dynamics in any area of First Nation research – whether it is history, education, anthropology, ICT or any other discipline – researchers need to be open to crossing the traditional boundaries of academic disciplines as well as looking at other perspectives and sources of knowledge.

A multidisciplinary approach to the research and writing of and for First Nations people, their culture, history, and so on is an aspect of what is called "the bricolage," which "is concerned not only with multiple methods of inquiry but with diverse theoretical and philosophical notions of the various elements encountered in the research act" (Kincheloe,). He points out that the critique of using such an approach to research has been that interdisciplinary is superficial by nature. First Nation scholars have emphasized the need for more accurate and sensitive means to researching First Nation people and to capture their voice, perspectives and realities. An approach such as the bricolage may benefit those scholars and First Nation groups who have challenged the traditional methods of researching and writing about First Nation people. Such an approach will not only use a cross-disciplinary process but also open the door for new questions, deeper analysis of Indigenous issues, the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives, the valuing of Indigenous knowledge and oral tradition, and the creation of new concepts and knowledge.

Using a cross-disciplinary approach to researching First Nation people opens the doors to various research methods and tools as well as various types of information to get a more accurate and respectful portrayal of First Nation history (Fixico, 1998). To some degree this concept is already being practiced, as with ethnohistory which combines history and anthropology (Fixico, 1998). Although it may be argued that this is yet another western mainstream concept with its standards and theories from the same western academic disciplines, it still holds possibilities for engaging other methods of inquiry, embracing different knowledges and giving voice to those groups that are normally silenced. The writing and research of First Nation history has largely been defined by non-First Nation scholars and has therefore set the boundaries on the process and methods for information collection and the types of information used in the research (Fixico, 1998).

The multidisciplinary or bricolage approach, as with any research approach focusing on Indigenous peoples, needs to be decolonized. Tuhiwai Smith (1999) explains that decolonization of western approaches to research and writing "is about centring our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999:39).

Wilson's (1998b) article challenges the traditional method of researching and writing history by supporting the use of oral tradition as a source that not only enhances the history but also fills in gaps normally left out of the history of First Nation people. Oral tradition allows First Nation perspectives to be included and also provides for an avenue allowing a "focus from the 'Indian atrocities' which are provided in rich detail in histories by non-Indian scholars, to 'white atrocities' and Indian courage" (Wilson, 1998:34-35). Further, researchers need to explore various sources of information that extend beyond the borders defined in the field of history and the role as "validators or verifiers of stories" (Wilson, 1998:35).

The teaching, researching and writing of specific First Nation information that may be sacred to some First Nation groups is an area of struggle for some First Nation scholars (Allen, 1998). Allen notes her own ethical dilemma in her capacity as a Native Studies instructor and as a First Nation person as she is confronted with the issue. She further challenges the utilization of oral tradition as a source used for research and writing as it may go against the moral and ethical values of the First Nation group and the keeping sacred of information around ceremonies, folklore and myths. This to some degree conflicts with the point made by Wilson (1998b) who supports the use of oral tradition as a means for presenting a First Nation perspective in the research and writing of First Nation history.

ENGAGING NEW BRUNSWICK FIRST NATIONS IN RICTA

Engaging New Brunswick First Nations in RICTA will require starting with an understanding of the five themes discussed above and a genuine desire to integrate these themes in all aspects of the research process.

ENGAGING NEW BRUNSWICK FIRST NATIONS IN RESEARCH

The RICTA cluster's core principle is research with Aboriginal communities **–** developing collaborative research projects that respond to the needs of Aboriginal communities as well as the needs of researchers. This principle recognizes that "research" and "engagement" are euro-centric concepts and that there are other ways of knowing such as an "Aboriginal Way of Knowing."

Working with First Nations in New Brunswick implies conducting research that is inclusive and respectful of the experiences, knowledge and wisdom of the different First Nations in New Brunswick and recognizing non-Western and non-scientific frameworks for conducting and disseminating research. It implies conducting research not only from the First Nations' perspectives but also within the cultural frameworks of the communities, ensuring that the communities are given an opportunity to have projects conducted within protocols that reinforce culture.

Working with First Nations in New Brunswick necessitates engaging participants from these First Nations in research activities and using research funds to employ local community members for the development of research initiatives. Where possible, this also means employing local community members in the preparation, collection, compilation and assessment of research data and production of reports.

Working with First Nations in New Brunswick requires facilitating social and cultural contributions and exchanges through the development of innovative delivery and reporting strategies and disseminating research in a culturally-sensitive manner. It requires promoting methods for research participants to express their views and their needs and to ensure that diverse community perspectives are heard.

RICTA researchers working with First Nations in New Brunswick need to gain an appreciation of the histories of the research participants and their communities and build respect for diverse, culturally appropriate modes of teaching and learning. This work opens up new opportunities for researchers to write for broader audiences and develop a positive image of communication built on community action, self-initiation and political commitment.

ENGAGING NEW BRUNSWICK FIRST NATIONS IN RESEARCH

Engaging New Brunswick First Nations in RICTA requires developing a cadre of researchers from participant communities to lead and participate in research on ICT with Aboriginal communities. This also involves developing programs that allow community members to teach academic researchers, developing projects in which young researchers from different cultural backgrounds work together in local communities, and valuing the contributions of women, youth and elders in the research process.

Building local research capacity in New Brunswick First Nations means locating research within a community development approach that leads to empowerment. It means conducting research aimed at enabling First Nation people to increase control over and improve their day-to-day existence, creating collaborative learning spaces in communities, and valuing participating in research by invitation, allowing for community-based research question identification and researcher response.

CONCLUSION

We are concluding this paper with personal reflections about questions that the research has raised for us and where we see the challenges for moving forward.

Sonja: As a First Nation researcher there are many benefits as well as disadvantages when researching and writing about and for First Nation people especially among my own people and within my own community. Many issues come to mind as I reflect on Mihesuah's guidelines and the themes that were revealed through the literature examined for this paper regarding First Nation or Indigenous research and writing. Many of these issues revolve around my values as a First Nation person and the concern I have for my community and the well-being of my people. So, any type of research would need to be sensitive to the concerns and issues of my community and should be given top priority. As I make my way along this path as a First Nation woman and researcher I recognize the many conflicts that exist both internally and externally that I will need to confront along the way and that there will be many more that I am not aware of. Perhaps my starting point has always been to take pride in being a Maliseet or Wolastoq woman from the Tobique First Nation or Neqotkuk as it was and continue to be known traditionally and to stay grounded in the values that support my people.

Susan: One of the most important questions raised for me in the research is how I can both respect the concept of OCAP and also develop my research relationships and work with First Nations in New Brunswick on ICT research. I see the next step for me as developing more self-awareness of my own history and perspectives and understanding why I am engaged in this type of research, what I have to offer and what I have to learn. One promising way forward is looking at the points of solidarity and commonalities between my own history and perspective and those of the First Nations people I am developing relationships with. I will never be an "insider" to First Nations but I can share common experiences and visions for the future. For example, as a dual Irish and Canadian citizen I have an understanding of how colonialism led to the cultural genocide of both my Irish ancestors and First Nations in Canada. I also believe that my understanding of gender issues and my experiences as a woman living in patriarchal societies gives me some common ground with First Nations women. I also share a strong common interest how ICT can facilitate social inclusion and cohesion and research on how this can happen.

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