

Kaandossiwin

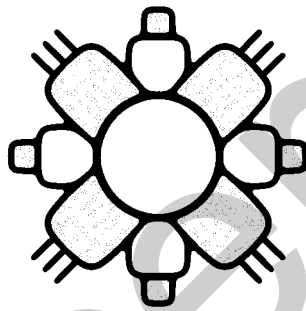
How We Come to Know
Indigenous re-Search Methodologies

2nd Edition



Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogiizhigokwe)

Kaandossiwin



Kaandossiwin

How We Come to Know
Indigenous re-Search Methodologies
2nd edition

Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogiizhigokwe)

Fernwood Publishing
Halifax & Winnipeg

Copyright © 2022 Kathleen E. Absolon

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form by any means without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review.

Development editing: Fazeela Jiwa

Copyediting: Lisa Frenette

Text design: Brenda Conroy

Cover image: Tsista Kennedy

Cover design: Ann Doyon

eBook: tikaebooks.com

Printed and bound in Canada

Published by Fernwood Publishing

32 Oceanvista Lane, Black Point, Nova Scotia, B0J 1B0
and 748 Broadway Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3G 0X3

www.fernwoodpublishing.ca

Fernwood Publishing Company Limited gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, the Manitoba Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism under the Manitoba Publishers Marketing Assistance Program and the Province of Manitoba, through the Book Publishing Tax Credit, for our publishing program. We are pleased to work in partnership with the Province of Nova Scotia to develop and promote our creative industries for the benefit of all Nova Scotians.



Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Title: Kaandossiwin: how we come to know : Indigenous re-search methodologies / by Kathleen E. Absolon (Minogiizhigokwe).

Names: Absolon, Kathleen E., 1961- author.

Description: 2nd edition. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: Canadiana (print) 20210354445 | Canadiana (ebook)

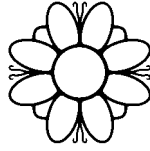
2021036338X | ISBN 9781773635170 (softcover) | ISBN 9781773635361

(EPUB) | ISBN 9781773635378 (PDF)

Subjects: LCSH: Indigenous peoples—Research—Canada—Methodology. |

LCSH: Research—Methodology.

Classification: LCC E76.7 .A27 2022 | DDC 305.897/071072—dc23



Contents

Acknowledgements / ix

Preface / xiv

Part I / I

Engaging Kaandossiwin in re-Searching

- 1 Preparing for re-Search: Having Tea and Bannock / 2
 - Re-Storying and Restoring Location / 7
 - Restoring Self: Locating My Self / 10
 - Decolonizing and Indigenizing My re-Search / 19
 - Language and Terminology / 22
 - Chapter Outlines / 29
- 2 Indigenous re-Search: Past, Present and Future / 32
 - Indigenous Peoples' Cultural History and Research / 32
 - Oral Traditions and Narrative / 34
 - Indigenous Knowledge Resurgence: Shifting Landscapes / 41
 - Trailblazers: re-Searchers and Their Searches / 56
 - My Own Search: A Journey of Making Meaning / 60
 - Notes / 69
- 3 Colonial Research Trauma Naming, Healing,
Decolonizing and Restoring Vision / 70
 - Healing Colonial Research Trauma / 77
 - Decolonizing Colonial Research
Trauma and Restoring Trust / 85
 - Relationality and Decoloniality / 89
 - Dreaming and Envisioning / 94

- 4 The Search Trail and Pathway: One Bead at a Time / 98
A Wholistic Pathway / 100
Planning: A Wholistic Four Directions Search Pathway / 103

Part 2 / 129

Wholistic re-Search Methodologies

- 5 Wholistic Worldviews and Methodologies / 130
A Petal Flower / 130
- 6 The Roots: Paradigms, Worldviews and Principles / 141
Principles / 155
- 7 The Flower Centre: Self as Central / 160
Self / 163
Location / 165
Situating Self in the Search / 169
Memory / 172
Motive and Purpose / 175
Searching for Congruency / 178
Note / 182
- 8 The Leaves: The Methodological Journey / 183
An Organic Process / 184
Travelling / 188
Transformation / 190
Healing / 193
- 9 The Stem: Backbone and Supports / 196
Critical Consciousness / 197
The Role of Critically Conscious Indigenous Scholars / 205
Indigenous Searchers' Strengths and Supports / 212
- 10 The Petals: Diverse Methodologies / 226
Spirit: Protocols, Ceremony and Honour / 230
Heart: Relationships, Reciprocity and Community / 234
Mind: Respecting Indigenous Knowledge / 242
Body: Doing, Working and Creating / 245
Diverse Knowledge Frameworks / 253

11 The Enviro-Academic Context / 255

Fences and Gatekeepers / 257

Allied Theories / 267

The Committee / 270

Writing Oral Traditions and Other Ironies / 272

Thorny, Prickly Challenges / 282

Notes / 288

12 A Decade of Indigenist re-Search Projects
and Methodologies / 289

Spirit/Vision / 295

Heart/Relationality / 297

Mind/Knowledge / 297

Body/Enactment / 298

Indigenous PhD Search Journeys:

Five Trailblazers and Pathmakers / 301

With Gratitude / 310

Note / 312

13 Leaving Good Footprints and Winding Down / 313

Note / 320

References / 321

Index / 331

In memory of my dear mother, Maukiizii'ode Kwe,
who was my greatest teacher.

My Cocomish and Shaumish,
who too have gone home to the Spirit World:

They knew how to search the Anishinaabe way and lived Kaandossiwin daily. I witnessed their Anishinaabe spirits, hearts and intelligence in life. I remember them and they taught me to be proud of being Anishinaabe. Their spirits inspire me to remember who we are, what we know and where we come from. They wanted us to know our identity and language as Anishinaabe and would have wanted these understandings and knowledge passed on.

My adult children whose Anishinaabe names are acknowledged:
Amanda (M'skwa jidamookwe), Aki (Giizhigokwe) and Cody (Mshiikenh). You all inspire me to be better, do better and to leave good footprints. You all encourage me every day with your unconditional love. G'zaagin!

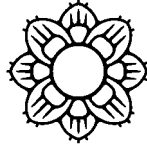
My parents, who taught me how to navigate the land and not get lost in the bush, and gave the opportunity to grow up close to the land with space and freedom.

The land and Creation: I am grateful a zillion times to all the sacred beings who informed my doing and being and for how Creation's instructions inform my life and work. G'chi Miigwech!

The ancestors and my dreams for leaving a trail and pathway
for folks like me to follow.

And to all those searchers, gatherers and hunters who are coming along the path. Those searching for truth. Those searching to restore Anishinaabe Kaandossiwin. Those who are yet to come and making your way. Remember who you are and don't get lost!

I dedicate this to all of you with love and hope.



Acknowledgements

G'chi Miigwech Creator for guiding me on this frightful, exciting and learned journey. *Miigwech* for blessing me with the abilities, supports and resources to undertake the work set forth on my path. *Miigwech* for granting me another day of life to fulfil my work in this earth lodge. *Miigwech* for your guidance, love, protection and gifts along the way. *Miigwech* for blessing my path with guidance from the dreamworld, Earth, creations, medicines, ceremonies, teachers and teachings as I searched and gathered. *Miigwech* for the memories of how to not get lost and for helping me find my way home. Many of my teachers have made their spirit journeys and to them I acknowledge in my prayers and through my feast baskets. To the sacred ones my prayers of gratitude are held in my *asema* ties and birchbark feast baskets. I honour them in ceremony every day.

The second edition of this book is cumulative, with many helpers and supports to thank. I never work alone, even if I am working alone. Writing is a lonely journey at times; however, we are never really alone. In the morning I offer my *asema* (tobacco) to G'chi Manidoo for their love and for another day of life. I address this new day with gratitude for the dreams that guide me and the spirit of a new day. I acknowledge Nookomisak (Grandmothers), M'shuamishak (Grandfathers), the spirits of the sacred doorways of the Waabung (East), Zhaanong (South), Niigaubiiianong (West) and Gweewatinong (North). All of Creation — the water, tree beings and all our sacred relatives in the natural world. There are many other human travellers walking and standing alongside my path whose knowledge, work, words, support, wisdom, help, guidance, debriefing, reflecting and sharing in tea make the world of difference to me. I know I am not alone.

To my eldest *daanis* (daughter), Amanda: I am grateful for her ma-

turity and her own academic goals as she now pursues her own doctoral studies at Wilfrid Laurier University and is embarking on her own search journey. The future is in solid hands as strong, kind and insightful Indigenous scholars, like you, make their way. *Miigwech* for your support and feedback. It was most valuable and appreciated. I love her and am so proud of her accomplishments. To *ndaanis* (my daughter), Akiesha, who has since completed her Master of Social Work in the Indigenous Field of Study and is doing good work within Indigenous communities. Her wisdom and knowledge continue to ground me. *Miigwech* to *ngwis* (my son), Cody, who carries turtle medicine and grounds my being in many ways. He is steadfast and stays close to the earth. His medicine is sacred and while he is finding his pathway he is a strong spirit. They all witness my human follies throughout my processes of gathering and searching for a good life. I would like to thank them for being who they are. *Chi'miigwech!* They would ask me from time to time how my work was going and I appreciated it. *Miigwech* for asking and for caring enough to inquire. I recognize that in becoming a parent and grandparent, lifelong relationships shift in time, and ours have shifted. My adult children are strong loving supports in my life, and I feel eternally blessed for their presence. They all bring such goodness to Creation in each of their own medicine bundles. *Miigwech* to them for allowing me to be their momma bear and offering up their *minobimaadiziwin* / a good life. *Miigwech* to Wahmahtig for your support, listening ear, life-long friendship, companionship and love. *Miigwech* to my mother, who previously read and affirmed the knowledge, experiences and history presented in this book and who is now on her own spirit journey. I cannot express in words the gratitude and love I have for my momma, who taught me so much about the land, grace and dignity. *Miigwech* to my father for teaching me to be strong, how to take care of finances and for the words of support. My grandchildren, nieces, nephews, brothers, sisters and relatives in Creation remind me about the importance of restoring the knowledge. Ultimately, through our work we serve, help and leave only good footprints.

I am thrilled about the revised artwork in this edition. The artist is Tehatsistahawi, also known as Tsista Kennedy, of the Turtle Clan from Chi'Mnissing First Nation and Oneida Nation of the Thames. He is also my nephew through his mother, my clan sister. Tsista graciously accepted my invitation to redo the illustrations and cover. I wanted to

Acknowledgements

Indigenize my petal flowers and I wanted to support a young Indigenous artist. In this edition, I requested the petal flower illustrations be unique. The cover represents Indigenous knowledge resurgence in the face of colonialism. I wanted a cover to represent the insatiable greed and consumption of colonialism and its attack on Indigenous knowledge and ways of coming to know. Colonialism is represented by the one-eyed beasts in the greyscale images. Indigenous knowledge and re-search are represented in strong, resilient, bold, colourful petal flowers with deep seeds and roots continually emerging despite colonialism. I love the vibrant orange colour reflecting another layer of Indigenous children and knowledge resurgence that Indian Residential Schools tried to annihilate. The imagery on the cover has layers of meaning and intention. His work is a reflection of the emergence of youth knowledge and wisdom. His talent began to emerge when he was a boy, and at the age of nineteen he is already an accomplished young artist. *Miigwech* Tsista for collaborating with me on revising the cover and Indigenizing the illustrations and their meaning and intention. I thoroughly enjoyed our conversations and watching your brilliance at work. If readers are interested in contacting this amazing young artist, you can email him at tkennedyart@gmail.com. I am so grateful to you Tsista!

The past continues to inform the present. *Miigwech* to my previous doctoral committee members for their mentorship and support: Dr. Laara Fitznor, Dr. Jean Paul Restoule and Dr. Eileen Antone. *Miigwech* to Laara, who supported me during my doctoral studies and who attended my sessions at the Shawane Dagoiwin Conferences. *Miigwech* to Dr. Angela Miles for all her time and energy in providing feedback, advice and guidance. *Miigwech* for the tea and sandwiches when eating and sharing seemed more appropriate than thesis analysis. *Miigwech* to all of you for the conversations, feasting and learning along the way.

I acknowledge the people whose experiences and knowledge informed this book. Their wisdom is carried forward in this second edition. I continue to hear Willie reminding me to build our libraries and Eber telling stories of how memory comes before knowledge. Dawn's genealogy of knowledge is ever present in this work, and I carry the wisdom of my friends Raven, Michael, Laara, Patricia and Maggie forward. And congratulations to all those Indigenous searchers who completed their doctoral theses and published books since 2011! I hope that this book is what you, too, can feel proud of. I always thoroughly enjoyed

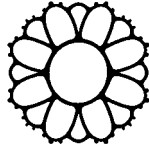
our conversations and felt supported and inspired in my journey. It's an amazing circle of searchers who aspire to decolonize and restore Indigenous knowledge. I am privileged to be a part of it. I am indebted to those who shared with me. I acknowledge the graduate students in my Indigenous re-search methodologies classes over the past fifteen years. I acknowledge those who invited me to join your committees and those whose work I was external examiner for. I have grown from my experiences with you. You have all taught me so much and while I was your teacher, the learning was definitely reciprocated, as you will see in the new chapters of this book. Because of your sharing in class and your feedback to me over the years, I have incorporated new chapters on the search journey, colonial research trauma and recent work in Indigenous methodologies. With the ongoing trailblazing happening, I acknowledge those Indigenous re-searchers who left solid footprints and whose path I can follow. Resurgence, resilience and Indigenous knowledge presence is restoring because of their good work.

I also acknowledge those helpers along the way who support my absence while I am writing and who hold up the fort. My team (Gus Hill, Lori Hill, Laura Mastronardi, Banakonda Kennedy-Kish Bell, Tina Armstrong and Cara Loft) in the Indigenous Field of Study, Faculty of Social Work at Wilfrid Laurier University. *Miigwech* to my team at the Centre for Indigegogy (Giselle Dias and Raven Morand), where we trailblaze restoring Indigegogy into Creation. I am grateful to be supported by such grounded and wise *kweok* in both my teams. *Miigwech* to Wayne, Fazeela, Beverley, Brenda and the team at Fernwood for all of your support for how I write and who I write for. I felt accompanied by many people, spirits and sacred beings who walked and carried me on this incredible journey of learning and sharing.

Finally, we never really walk alone and there are many other teachers, Elders, friends and community members who walk with me and who have supported my journey. *Miigwech* to my community, Flying Post First Nation Treaty 9 for all their support. We are now building community with culture and it's such good community relationship building. *Miigwech* to my many Anishinaabe brothers and sisters across Turtle Island: Elder Banakonda K.K.B., Elder Tina A., Elder Edna M. and Elder Kathy B. *Miigwech* to my ceremonial families and I have many (you know who you are). *Miigwech* to those friends and peers who support and hold me up and whose work informs my journey: Bonnie F,

Acknowledgements

Brenda C., Charisse S., Darrel M., Giselle D., Gladys R., Jo-Ann A., Kim W., Laine L., Nikki R., Nicole P., Jo-Anne M., Raven S., Randi R., Rejean P., Ruth K.G., Sandee M., Shelley S., Susan D., Theresa T., Shane T., and Violet C. ban. *Miigwech* for placing me in your prayers and for the messages of support. Your support meant so much especially since the passing of my mom. I knew I had to keep on going forward, so *Miigwech* for encouraging me to persevere and persist on a journey that, at times, feels lonely and alienating. You know who you are, and because of your heartened support I continued.



Preface

Boozhoo nindiwaynimaaginidok. Chi miigwechiwendam noongiizhgad. Greetings to all my relations. I am grateful today. I love to write in the morning. Mornings offer me reflective spaces to follow the guidance of my spirit. Perhaps mornings are when my spirit is closer to my consciousness. Coming from the dream world is a transition where I make my tea and gift myself quiet time to pray, reflect and make my morning offerings to Creation. I give myself thirty minutes before I busy myself. This time of transition is a spirit consciousness space whereby I linger in moments of reflection as thoughts and feelings flow like the slow passing clouds. I reflect on what a preface is and then I begin.

My fingers slowly strike the keyboard and I feel uncertain about how to begin to explain my intentions for this book and second edition. The first edition was hurdle jumping, thinking I wasn't able to publish a book let alone believe that people would be interested in reading it. I'm grateful for the audiences that have found the first edition of *Kaandossiwin* useful and meaningful. I'm sure that many could identify with my own internal hurdles of worthiness and value. They come from my colonial education in public school. One of my grade school report cards stated: "Kathy is a pleasant girl but should not expect to be successful." That report card exposes the working place I was *supposed* to occupy in society. Today, I feel empowered and triumphant that I, that supposedly "unsuccessful" Indian child, has written a book on Indigenous ways of coming to know. Now I am publishing the second edition. That must mean the knowledge contained has value and is valued by other searchers. I want other Indigenous Peoples to see and know that who we are, what we know and where we come from matters. I want Indigenous intelligence visible. I want to make possibilities visible. *Kaandossiwin: How We Come to Know* exemplifies one possibility.

Preface

Many people encouraged me to publish my doctoral thesis (2008) into the first edition (2011) and I'm so grateful for the urging encouragement along the way. Today the need to build Indigenous knowledge libraries continues and while our world is forever changing and shifting we continue to take our place and assert relationality and relational accountability in Indigenous knowledge resurgence. Our relations matter. This second edition is for those, like me, who are searching to lift up Indigenous methodologies in how they come to know in their research. We are building Indigenous libraries and resources that validate Indigenous ways of searching for knowledge. Indigenous knowledge systems are living and fluid, not concrete and fixed like typeset words. This second edition continues to illustrate the ways in which Indigenous re-search methodologies are guiding Indigenous knowledge resurgence and restoring Indigeneity. What I mean is that this second edition continues to take its place in a circle of a larger process where Indigenous searchers, such as Maggie Kovach, Shawn Wilson, Jean Paul Restoule, Deborah McGregor, Jo-Ann Archibald and others, are articulating the spaces in which voices and knowing reside but were never allowed to be heard. We are here and we are not going anywhere.

Indigenous ways of coming to know are spirit guided and reflect my relationship to the ancestors, land and natural world. My worldview is woven into this work through the gift of a petal flower. I bring wholism into how we search to restore a wholistic lens in re-search. Through integrating my location, imagery, poetry and prose, photographs and storytelling, I illustrate the diverse ways in which we can represent our knowledge in text. I want to expose readers to exploring ways to bring your location into how you search. To lift up what you bring to your search and restore trust within self. We don't know what we don't know. My work sets forth to make the invisible visible. To take the blindfold off the colonial coma and wake us up. To restore humanness, spirit, heart and creativity into how we come to know. *Kaandossiwin* both disrupts the colonial erasure and amnesia while promoting searchers to be who they are and search from their location. This book is imperative to dismantling colonial research methodologies and trauma. Colonizing knowledges has attempted to silence Indigenous ways of coming to know and has fabricated notions that Indigenous methodologies do not exist or are wishy washy soft methodologies. I contest those notions in this book. Creating space for how we come to know is what this book

is about. *Kaandossiwin* is an Anishinaabe word that describes a process of how we come to know — a process of acquiring knowledge. It is a living word that loosely translates to processes of knowledge, gathering and coming to know. This book is about *Kaandossiwin* and speaks to journeys of learning, being and doing. I present Indigenous ways of searching (re-search methodologies) and share some of the diverse and varied ways that conscious Indigenous re-searchers are conducting re-search within the academy. My commitment is to honour Indigenous re-searchers, knowledge and ways of producing knowledge.

In the first edition I acknowledged the journey continues for the resurgence of Indigenous re-search methodologies in the buffet of re-search. This new edition with added chapters affirms that my learning journey into how I come to know is always in process. As I grow, learn and change, so will my offering to you. Indigenous knowledge resurgence is shifting and as this is published more will shift and change. Our fluidity and restoration is happening. I present this second edition as an offering, much like an offering of a blueberry pie after the searching, gathering and sorting. This offering is to those who themselves are knowledge seekers and those who are searching for ways of knowing



I am an avid berry picker and I search for the bluest berries.

Preface

that wholistically include the spirit, heart, mind and body. This work is for those who seek to broaden how they search to include self-location, spirit, heart, Indigenous knowledge and wholism. My blueberry pie is now ready to share. As an avid berry picker myself, I know that I have spent months contemplating and preparing to search. Searching for the best berries takes preparation, perseverance and patience. Travelling and searching for blueberries is very much like re-search. Searching the land for berries is hard work and picking the berries is even harder. After gathering baskets and baskets of the bluest berries, I sort them, organize them and prepare them for jam, pies, tarts and sauce so I can share my harvest with others. This second edition represents an ongoing journey and represents a second stage of my search for knowledge on how we come to know. This is my blueberry pie offering. I hope it feeds your spirit, heart, mind and body in a way that is healing, truthful and resurgent!