Walking in Two Worlds: Engaging the Space Between Indigenous Community and Academia

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Certainly in the past and even in the present day, the term *research* for Indigenous people has been fraught with strong, negative, emotional associations; however, despite the many remaining challenges there is a shifting within the landscape of academia to recognize that research on Indigenous issues must cultivate respectful and reciprocal relationships with those communities. In this study, we demonstrate that to conduct research collaboratively based on elements of respect, relationship, relevance, and reciprocity, all collaborators must walk in two worlds to balance the needs of communities with the systemic realities of academia. To illustrate our point, we focus our story on one project that is currently underway between the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and Brock University. In our narrative we illustrate how the relationships that were fostered call into question commonly accepted university practices as well as engage community partners in understanding some of the limitations and possibilities in some of those practices. This article focuses on some tough issues; however, the collaborators in this project are in the process of forging something new that may serve as one example of how such partnerships can be authentically created.

Pour les peuples autochtones, le mot "recherche" a été et demeure toujours empreint de fortes associations émotives négatives; cependant, malgré les défis importants qui se doivent d'être surmontés, on constate un changement au sein du monde universitaire : la reconnaissance que la recherche sur les thèmes et les réalités des peuples autochtones doit d'abord et avant tout être fondées sur des relations réciproques respectueuses avec ces communautés. Notre étude démontre que pour mener une recherche réellement collaborative fondée sur les éléments du respect, de l'entrée en relation, de la pertinence et de la réciprocité, l'ensemble des collaborateurs doivent se situer dans l'entre-deux assurant ainsi l'équilibre entre les besoins des communautés autochtones et les exigences du monde universitaire. Afin d'illustrer ce constat, nous vous partageons le déroulement et le dénouement d'une collaboration réelle entre les Six Nations de la région de Grand River et des chercheurs de l'Université Brock (Ontario). Notre exposé narratif démontre comment la création et le développement de liens authentiques entre les membres de la communauté des Six Nations et les universitaires ont remis en question des pratiques courantes de la culture universitaire et permis un espace discursif pour expliquer aux partenaires communautaires les limites et les avantages de certaines de ces pratiques. Cet article aborde donc des thèmes difficiles; cependant, les collaborateurs à ce projet sont à forger de nouveaux processus et de nouvelles pratiques de recherche qui peuvent servir d'exemple pour la création de partenariats authentiques en recherche collaborative.

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Eurocentrism, a system characterized by intellectual privilege and epistemic narcissism, has played a central role in the colonization of peoples globally. Within academia, and in particular the research field, the underpinnings of this Eurocentric orientation have long played a central role. Intellectual privilege and an assumed perspective of some researchers have served not only to alienate those participant populations researchers sought to examine, but also to dismantle patterns of trust and rapport that might have been possible in respectful and truly collabora-

tive endeavours. As such, Indigenous[1] populations generally have equated the term *research* synonymously with issues of misrepresentation, othering, exploitation, and co-optation. Historically and even contemporarily, Indigenous ways of knowing and being have, for the most part, not found a space of legitimacy within academic disciplinary discourse, nor are the systemic structures within academe designed to address the unique concerns Indigenous research poses. However, despite these challenges, the landscape in academia appears to be shifting. There is a glimmering recognition of, not only the need for research on Indigenous issues, but that this research, and indeed all research, must be done in a manner that cultivates the *golden rule* of collaborative, community-based research: Respect, Relevance, Relationship, and Reciprocity (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Indigenous communities, funding agencies, universities, and researchers all recognize the need and the possibilities for effective, positive, and collaborative research. There is wariness, however, of the landmines that still remain buried within a landscape of disparate epistemologies, mistrust, and isomorphic discourse.

   Historical roots of colonialism have left Indigenous people as a global, culture-sharing group resistant towards academe, with its perceived inflexible systemic policies and research that in the past was not seen to be culturally aligned or respectful. Noted Indigenous scholars such as Linda T. Smith, Graham H. Smith, Russell Bishop, Willie Ermine, and John Hodson have worked diligently to create space for the development and implementation of various culturally centred, power-sharing models of collaborative, community-based research, knowledge production, building of community partnerships, as well as co-creating and (re)defining boundaries and protocols around Indigenous community/university issues of ownership and control of knowledge. Bishop and Glynn's (1996) power sharing model tests research on five points of interest: initiation, benefits, representation, legitimacy, and accountability. These five points of interest can be articulated through Smith's (1999) critical questions: Whose research is it? Who owns it? Whose interests

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[1]   Within the context of this document the term Indigenous refers to the original or first people of any country and is used interchangeably with the term Aboriginal. In Canada it also includes First Nations, Métis, and Inuit unless otherwise specifically noted.

does it serve? Who will benefit from it? Who has designed its questions and framed its scope? Who will carry it out? Who will write it up? How will the results be disseminated? Hodson's (2007) discussion on the Wildfire Research Methodology with its four-stage collaborative process, together with Styres' (2008) conceptualization of the Hodenosaunee Research Method (HRM), consider how epistemically disparate groups can come together to create and engage a space for the co-development of a common vision and purpose as well as the development of relationships between community and researchers. Ermine's (2005) notion of ethical space between two knowledge systems is a convergence of disparate worldviews that shift the asymmetrical balance of power into a collaborative partnership model between epistemic communities that, in essence, works to develop cross-cultural linkages.

According to Styres (2008), the HRM is a holistic research method that seeks to remove artificial barriers by drawing on the values and philosophy of the small Condolence ceremony as a model for engaging one particular culture-sharing community in action research in a manner that is culturally appropriate and sensitive, while respecting and understanding the sacredness of this ritual. This method begins with each party coming together to engage in dialogue and delineate the phenomenon from his or her own unique perspective. Individuals who are welcomed in a reciprocal demonstration of respect are provided light refreshments in a venue that is warm, inviting, intimate, and attached to the land. Through various storied voices, individuals have an opportunity (a) to recognize and rejoice in each other's struggles, successes, and sorrow; (b) to connect what is being endured in the current reality with his or her individual and communal responsibilities; and (c) to rekindle the common fire around dialogue, which is designed to be reflective and engaging.

The HRM can also be used as a metaphor for re-conceptualizing mutuality and egalitarianism in this community-based and power-sharing research process. As individuals are invited to go beyond the boundaries of their own individual experiences, the two previously disparate groups can now work together building relationships to achieve common goals and a united vision in collaborative knowledge building. This process is reflected in the joint partnership created through the collaborative

process of co-creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) be-
tween Six Nations of the Grand River Territory (Six Nations) and Brock
University, a process that we discuss briefly later on.

   This article shares the story of how a group of community organiza-
tions negotiated a relationship with researchers from Brock University to
explore student success within Six Nations. It is a story told in multiple
voices that include the perspectives of Michelle (an Indigenous commu-
nity member), Sandra (an Indigenous community member, researcher,
and student at York University), as well as Dawn and Sheila (non-
Indigenous faculty members). In sharing this story we focus on the ten-
sions of walking between two worlds: addressing the intransigence of
university protocols, developing a MOU, negotiating the tensions be-
tween insider and outsider perspectives, negotiating and navigating eth-
ical space, as well as exploring the internal challenges that were trig-
gered by these experiences. At times, our voice is a collective voice and
at others we identify the individual voices as they speak to their own
experiences. Our purpose is to share our story in the hope that others
will draw their own lessons from our explorations of the challenges that
we negotiated.

HODENOSAUNEE RESEARCH METHOD AS A FRAMEWORK TO ENGAGE COMMUNITY

According to both Hodson (2007) and Styres (2008), HRM, as a frame-
work to engage community in action research, is grounded in human-
ity's experiences with loss and despair, and seeks to re-balance a human-
ity that has been deeply impacted and weighed down with grief, loss,
and sorrow. Further, it is premised in the unwavering belief in a particu-
lar fundamental truth: That all human beings are capable of rational
thought and want to engage those thoughts through building positive,
healthy relationships.

   On the journey. The journey begins when individuals first come to-
gether. The condolers, visitors or those seeking peace, would be standing
there singing songs with wampum belts hanging from their arms to an-
nounce that they are coming in peace to consecrate a new relationship.

   Welcome at the wood's edge. Individuals receiving the condolence wel-
come the visitors. Reciprocal demonstrations of respect are very import-

ant. In terms of the progress of the ceremony, the visitors have announced themselves and will now be welcomed.

Rejoicing in survival. Individuals collectively celebrate what they have endured and how individual and collective experiences have made them stronger.

Recognizing pain and sorrow. Recognition is about connecting what individuals have endured in their current reality and recognizing moral and spiritual responsibilities.

Recognizing ancestral responsibilities. Individuals are all responsible to their ancestors to ensure the health and well-being of community. This act prepares individuals for transforming dysfunctional and unhealthy constructs that have become bogged down by grief and sorrow.

Requickening. Requickening is about bringing something back to life, in this instance, redirecting and refocusing the dialogue into positive action such as, where do we go from here? This process will redirect energies into more positive and creative dialogue that speaks of life energy, hope, passion, light, creativity, and renewed commitment.

The rare words. The condolers can now wipe the eyes, cleanse the throat, and unblock the ears of those receiving the condolence in order to be able to move beyond the pain of personal and collective experiences.

As leaders, what must be done? Leaders must be aware of any pitfalls such as misunderstandings and work together to develop mutually agreed upon terminology, be aware of and observe protocols that will contribute to the ongoing relationship in a good way, and come alongside and work with the current generation as well as preparing the way for the next generation.

The principles of HRM have been a guiding force throughout the present study and we now turn to describe the challenges with collaboration and the bridging of two worlds. At times we struggled with our own sense of belonging and relation to both academia and the community, and other times we questioned the very foundations of our different beliefs. Throughout it all we have clung to each other and strived to maintain Respect, Relevance, Relationship, and Reciprocity (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991).

CREATING AND ENGAGING THE SPACE (*MICHELLE*)

In the summer of 2005, Six Nations Police Service (SNPS) investigated three occurrences involving three, 12-year-olds, each having dropped out of school the previous year. Recently, another youth attended school in the 2006/2007 calendar year for only two weeks, and again in the 2007/2008 calendar year for only one week, each time refusing to attend school despite intense urging. The Grand Erie District School Board's (GEDSB) Liaison Officer, overwhelmed, met with SNPS to brainstorm ideas on how to motivate Six Nations students to attend school.

The reality for the Six Nations student population of 1250 elementary students and 800 high school students is that they miss an average of 26 days per school year (Grand Erie District School Board, personal communication, 2006). GEDSB reports there is a 10 to 15 per cent increase of absenteeism towards the end of the school year and as students get into higher grades. Analogous is Six Nations Welfare Department's increasing caseloads of high school drop-outs seeking social assistance. However, absenteeism, truancy problems, and crushing social welfare caseloads are not unique to Six Nations community.

Many Aboriginal communities struggle with low school attendance and graduation rates. Like Six Nations, each community has tried different approaches to address these issues. For example, Nunavut High School, which serves a town of some 1,200 Aboriginal people has approximately 160 students from grades 7 to 12, established the *Kugluktuk High School Athletics Association* (Kugluktuk Grizzlies) to engage the students in school. The Kugluktuk Grizzlies has successfully used sport and recreation opportunities as incentives for staying in school (Shepard, 2008). Similarly, New Credit First Nations Education Authority officials have also adopted strategies to address low school attendance and graduation rates by providing monetary incentives to their students as follows: For A and B grades, students receive $15 and $10 each; high school students receive $25 for every credit achieved. Although both these approaches have been successful in their respective communities, each has a smaller population base than Six Nations, making their solutions less viable for Six Nations.

The Six Nations Police Services organized a meeting in the summer of 2006 with the elementary principals, social services representatives,

GEDSB, Six Nations Welfare, Native Services Branch of the Children's Aid Society, and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nations (New Credit) Education Authority officials. The New Credit Education Authority Coordinator noted that New Credit was able to provide incentives due to their smaller population (New Credit Education Authority, personal communication, 2006). The group determined annual incentives were a plausible idea; however, an incentive program would be quite costly even if only two thirds of the total Six Nations student population were rewarded. Hence, a brain-storming session arose around possible strategies, and those present at the meeting formed a group of concerned community partners and *Student Success*, a community organization collaboration, was born.

During subsequent meetings of this community-partner group, discussions centred on the issues facing Six Nations elementary and high school students. Some issues attributed to school absenteeism included medical problems such as asthma, allergies, lack of physical activity, and head lice. This group also considered other possible reasons linked to school absenteeism: lack of family and meal structure, no clean clothes, intergenerational impacts of colonization, and familial apathy toward school attendance.

Community partners also identified other significant issues that were having tremendous impact on Six Nations students. These issues include implications of the Indian Act, school choice, the role of sports in the community, and accommodation of ceremonies in school calendars. According to the *Indian Act* (Department of Justice, 1985), children ages 6 to 16 years of age are required to attend school; however, parents retain the right to school choice. School choice includes options such as community schools, home schooling, as well as enrolling students in non-community schools. In addition, sports are a crucial social aspect of community. However, Six Nations Minor sports games are played very late into the evening with the result that students are sleep deprived, and at time may miss school either to play or to provide fan support at major sports events. There are additional issues around school schedules such as the need to accommodate ceremonies in a school calendar not designed to reflect traditional ceremonial values, leading to increased absences from school.

Some discussion ensued around implementing an alternative school such as Ian Hill's *I Can Do Anything* School in Arizona (Fay Williams, personal communication, July 6, 2005). Students attend school in blocks (7:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., and 4:00 p.m.). This model has documented very successful student attendance rates. There was also talk about models that would incorporate more physical activities into the schools because some partners were familiar with schools that had taken that approach, and others mentioned the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada's position statement on schools and physical activity that calls for greater physical activity within schools and in leisure time.

Student Success Group and Brock University

The *Student Success Group* determined to work towards a list of short- and long-term goals focusing on the primary grades (junior kindergarten to grade 3). The group struggled with the decision over whether or not to partner with any organizations outside Six Nations. They ultimately decided to approach Brock University. The partnership between the community partners group known as the *Student Success Group* and Brock University was not a typical formal request to partner. As frequently occurs within *Indian Country*, the partnership grew from a fate-driven-by-chance encounter. With the Six Nations Police Service taking the lead in the *Student Success Group*, the Community Service Coordinator started a formal dialogue in 2006 with the Program Recruiter for Brock University's Tecumseh Centre for Aboriginal Research and Education. Since then, there has been much work completed and I (Michelle) found myself in the role of Community Liaison.

As the Community Liaison I feel uncertain in this journey. What does bridging both worlds mean for my people? As an Aboriginal person I struggled with the seeming need to elicit Western ideologies and systems to evaluate ourselves, but which continue to keep our people dependent on the global, hierarchical mentality of thought. This elicitation is exactly what I did when I invited Brock University to research issues around absenteeism.

As we entered this journey with Brock, I was continuously reminded of the impact of colonization and the irony of needing to partner ourselves with a bureaucratic system. As I struggled with the tensions in-

herent in that partnership, I took comfort in the remembered guidance of my great grandmother, who spoke Cayuga to us and talked about valuing our parents, helping with chores, and of course, disciplined us. The most memorable lesson she taught me was to respect all things and all life. A traditional woman in the truest sense, she, in retrospect, was warning me that if we do not walk out that respect, we will become people we are not, and we will hurt all life. We have entered into an era where our people struggle with defining culture and its relevancy to their everyday existence. Education is a prime example of the struggles with the impact of colonization on our culture.

Historically, education was not what we see today. We, the Hodenosaunee of Six Nations, were and continue to be a highly educated people, having knowledge based in the philosophy of the natural environment. I acknowledge we are now dealing with social dysfunction in our community and as a result, brown faces are being raised in a community immersed in values of power, greed, and individualism. We have become dependent on social agencies to manage our children. I continue to struggle with the mainstream systems and processes that we have adopted and were not a part of our traditional way of being. These bureaucratic processes are not in keeping with traditional models of decision making. Providing opportunities for organizations to sign off on as their own entity empowers and validates individuals and organizations. To find value in others enacted in demonstrations of respect is an expression of what it means to be Hodenosaunee and is not reflected in bureaucratic processes. Hodenosaunee, as an embodiment of trust and respect, is reflected in the Managers of Six Nations organizations wanting their departments to be involved in the *Student Success* initiative, trusting that they were making a sound decision in partnering with our initiative.

I find that our community has moved away from some of our traditional values in promoting mainstream thoughts and processes. At times I feel as if we are merely brown faces pushing Eurocentric policies and procedures. My own graduate work has prompted me to reflect on my personal worldview, and I am, to my dismay, finding numerous parallels with mainstream systems. I know the principle of the Two Row

Wampum[2] indicates we are to remain in our separate worlds but I cannot, at this point, distinguish Hodenosaunee values and processes from mainstream.

Throughout this project, Brock University has demonstrated a deeper sense of respect for our community values and traditions than we as a community have. I think that the outsider looking in appears more cognizant than we are regarding our cultural values.

I understand the need for an Ethics process and more so for our own people because we have partnered with outside systems that have consistently exploited our communities. The ethics process reaffirms our cultural ways, that everything takes time, and has illustrated the level of readiness in our community.

As an individual who has been heavily influenced by Western ideologies, this research experience attests to Hodenosaunee values. As the old adage says, *things happen for a reason*. The concept of the time it has taken to move forward on the work is due to the fact that the Creator is teaching us spiritual lessons along this journey. He knows when and how the community will be ready to move forward.

This process has taken a long time; the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been particularly difficult. I would like to see empowered those who are interested – give them the pen. Nonetheless, we rely on Senior Administration to give us the go ahead and the only information they have on the project is a one page briefing note. Our people are great speakers and we miss so much when we do not have the opportunity to hear from all the participating voices.

The fact that we use an MOU is once again attesting to mainstream dependencies. No matter what lens you look through, the processes re-

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[2]   A treaty is a mutually approved agreement between disparate groups or nations as to how they will interact with one another. The agreement can take on various physical forms that represent the agreement such as the creation of a wampum belt or a signed document. "The Two Row Wampum Treaty was a treaty that set out the terms of how the Silver Covenant Treaty would be enacted. One row represents the European settlers' canoe (or government/political systems) and the other row representing the Indigenous people of Turtle Island's canoe (or government/political systems) with the stipulation that neither of the canoes would intermingle or interfere one with the other, but would remain distinct, equal, and independent from one another" (Styres, 2008, p. 208).

sult in our being dependent on another system. I know we have tried to make this process unique to Six Nations, but I wonder if there is such a thing.

A concept for me to grasp is that it does not matter who takes the lead in projects; we are still not working together as a community. I had hoped with this initiative encompassing children, youth, families, and agencies that all of the organizations involved would have had a vested interest in the project, but we continue to work in fragmented silos, bickering for resources, and ultimately, we manage to take only small steps before falling over.

Although we are heavily influenced by the fast, efficient ways to live life, we as Hodenosaunee possess a different worldview. We must keep in mind that we are the First Peoples in this land and despite cultural genocide we know what it is to *be* a brown face. But the question remains, how?

AN ABORIGINAL PERSPECTIVE ON UNIVERSITY COLLABORATION (*SANDRA*)

In June 2006 I placed a call to Michelle Bomberry, the Community Service Coordinator with the Six Nations Police Services, which is the community in which I also reside. The call concerned a matter unrelated to research, and following that conversation Michelle asked me about the Tecumseh Centre's mandate and involvement in community research. She informed me about a community-driven initiative comprising several community organizations who had become alarmed by the circumstances of a segment of their youth population at Six Nations. These organizations had formed a loose consortium of public secondary schools, community police services, welfare department, and social development office. I was asked if the Tecumseh Centre would be interested in partnering with this consortium to assist the community to conduct research for the express purpose of exploring the elements of that social phenomenon. After several in-house meetings among the staff at the Tecumseh Centre, it was decided that this project did indeed fall within the scope of the vision for the Centre.

Created in 2004, the vision of the Tecumseh Centre was to establish a research focus at Brock University to connect Aboriginal and mainstream scholars, researchers, and students to Aboriginal peoples and communities. This research focus would be conducted in culturally appropriate ways in an effort to further the understanding of the complex educational, health, socio-economic, and socio-cultural realities of Aboriginal people, and to create new and innovative educational programming to promote and encourage the transformation of those same realities. This direct connection between *research* and *programming* is reflected in the holistic nature of Aboriginal epistemologies.

Over the course of several meetings with the consortium at Six Nations, the ensuing dialogue explored the relationship between skyrocketing drop out rates and criminal behaviour in high-school-aged youth, welfare roles, and crushing caseloads. Gradually, by voicing their individual experiences and hearing the experiences of others, a hypothesis emerged to link the realities of a segment of the youth population with an earlier pattern of chronic absenteeism and lateness in their earlier primary school years. However, all was not smooth sailing.

Among the Six Nations community, there is an undercurrent of resistance around academia and research. One member of the consortium was adamant that they did not require a university partnership to conduct research in their own community. The Tecumseh Centre agreed and advised the members of the consortium as to how they could proceed by themselves. After much deliberating and passing the arguments for and against across the council fire, the consortium realized that partnering with the Tecumseh Centre would provide access to resources, knowledge, and funding opportunities that would enhance their project. The consortium reached consensus when the opposing member agreed not to block the research partnership between the consortium and Brock University.

Currently, the representation of Aboriginal PhDs in academia is deficient. When the consortium was in the process of establishing a relationship with Brock University, there were no Aboriginal professors at Brock. This reality necessitated considering mainstream professors with experience in Aboriginal Research to be the principal investigator on a

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) grant. Thus, a research team was born.

The term *loose* consortium meant that several individuals would attend some meetings but not all, or that members would come into and subsequently leave the consortium membership periodically. As a result, when the research team came together for meetings, we were required, for the benefit of individual consortium members, to go over all the material that they had not engaged in from the previous meeting due to their own absence. This repetition of materials also meant that the same questions and concerns were masticated over and over again. During one such meeting, two principals from two of the community's Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) supported schools, who had not attended any of the previous meetings, became highly agitated and resistant to the project. They were convinced that, through the research, we were going to discount, disrespect, tarnish, or otherwise devalue their schools, their educators, and by extension, the way they conducted education. The research team reiterated several times that we were looking for ways to support schools not to discount them, but in their resistance their ears were closed to our voices.

INAC,[3] who received word of the complaints from the two principals, forbade the schools to participate in the research project. Enthusiasm waned within the consortium when we lost the support of the schools; however, individual teachers and supporters within the schools system approached the project's newly designated community liaison, Michelle Bomberry, indicating their willingness to participate in the research as community members.

During this time, Dawn Zinga, the Principal Investigator, and I co-authored an Aboriginal Developmental SSHRC grant proposal. Due to the delays and difficulties around developing and solidifying the relationships within the community consortium, the window of opportunity for writing and submitting the grant became very narrow. As well, it was our intention in the grant to create a partnership based on equitable contribution from both the consortium and the university. As such, I, as the

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3   Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) is the funding agency for the schools in this community. Because INAC controls the funding, they also wield tremendous power and control.

representative of the Tecumseh Centre, was responsible to obtain and collect all the letters of support, signatures, resumes, and biographies of the consortium members for inclusion in the SSHRC grant. Finally, following four weeks of intense and diligent work, we submitted our grant to meet the December 2006 deadline. We received notification in April 2007 that we were successful and awarded the grant.

The non-academic members of the consortium, who were surprised at the amount of work required to prepare and submit the grant, indicated that they had never participated in any research project where they had this much involvement. During a subsequent meeting while discussing the ethics applications, I advised the consortium that Six Nations now had their own ethics process that we needed to abide by. Because none of the consortium members was aware of this fact, I proceeded to gather all the necessary information required to complete the Six Nations Ethics proposal. While the Principal Investigator completed and submitted the documentation for the Brock ethics, I worked on the Six Nations ethics documentation, which included some identical attachments. Working diligently together, the ethics proposals were completed and submitted in August 2007.

The Six Nations Ethics Committee meets only once each month and, after their summer holiday schedule, and several e-mails back and forth requesting clarification as to our intentions and the scope of the proposed research, they called on us to attend their next scheduled meeting in October 2007 to present our research directly to the Committee. All but one committee member were in attendance at the presentation.

The Council chamber where we presented was set up in a horseshoe pattern with what was humorously referred to as the *hot seat* at the opening of the horseshoe, where they were going to seat us. Because it had only two seats and four of us had come to conduct the presentation along with the Principal Investigator's infant, the seating arrangements were subsequently modified and we were seated along with the committee within the horseshoe. In my view this significantly changed the dynamics of the presentation to reflect a more collaborative, equitable, and relational atmosphere.

After the introductions we began our presentation with their initial question regarding how our study would affect education on Six Na-

tions. We reiterated that we, at this point, had no idea how it would, or if it would, have any effect on the education system in the community. We used phrases like "supporting education" and "this is a community-driven enhancement endeavour." Only one member on the Ethics committee admittedly had any experience with education and research, a fact that became increasingly evident while we attempted to present the research project. Not surprisingly, agreed upon terminology, data storage, as well as ownership and control of Indigenous knowledge were particularly contentious issues. Ethics committee members also expressed concern that the findings from this initial *scoping* research would be used out of context.

It became quite clear from the scope of the questions that the committee had stopped reading the application at the Research Methodology section, where they became stuck and resistant. My discussion of the research methodology created a tremendous amount of controversial dialogue. The heated dialogue ensued around issues of culture and religion. I was confused by their response because our research was not about religion but about engaging community in research that was culturally aligned.

The final item for discussion was the joint partnership expressed through a MOU. This issue further re-generated the heated dialogue concerning issues of ownership. The Committee determined that after the consortium and Brock had produced a collaborative draft of a MOU, they wanted to peruse it for their review and comment. Although this step could potentially be particularly problematic, contentious, and time-consuming, we found that it was necessary for engaging the community in collaborative research. If we intended to say that, as researchers, we were going to shift the landscape of Aboriginal research and work with communities, then we had also, as part of that statement, to work in supporting the Band Council and by extension the Ethics Committee, to demonstrate and promote respect for their role in protecting the community from unethical research that perpetuates research based on Aboriginal people as subjects rather than active participants in research involving their own communities and by extension, community members.

The meeting ended on a positive note because we received their full support to proceed with the research project pending their review of the

MOU. We thanked the Committee for their work and their valuable input. We all remained after the presentation to engage in informal dialogue and, of course, to visit with the baby. The Committee subsequently shared the difficulties that they had encountered in getting individual researchers and universities to value and adhere to their ethics process. As a community member and in my capacity as a member of Brock's Aboriginal Research Advisory Circle (ARAC), I was particularly concerned that certain researchers were choosing to ignore the ethics process at Six Nations. The meeting was subsequently concluded with an agreement to further the relationship between the Council, Ethics Committee, and Brock through collaborative promotion and implementation of a research forum.

The Memorandum of Understanding

The creation of the MOU was a particularly interesting endeavour, one in which both I and by extension the Tecumseh Centre felt that we had a moral and spiritual responsibility to ensure that we balanced and protected the rights of both the consortium and the university. The consortium had, during this process, trusted the Tecumseh Centre to continuously keep their best interests in the forefront of all discussions and it was crucial that trust be the cornerstone for the creation of the MOU. That relationship had to be protected and cultivated as we moved forward through this process; it could not be presumed upon and was tenuous and delicate. The Tecumseh Centre has a multi-layered responsibility to educate and build capacity within community, the University, and with various faculty members who wanted to work with Indigenous communities. In effect, the Tecumseh Centre was bridging the cultural divide between mainstream and traditional knowledge systems – the role they played in the research process.

The idea was brought forth that to develop a MOU that would be meaningful and inclusive, we had to examine the various levels of interests that were in play regarding this project. We identified the following parties with a vested interest in this project: Consortium, Six Nations Band Council Ethics Committee, Brock University, Principal Investigator, SSHRC, Tecumseh Centre, and graduate students. Further, we needed to take into account the governing principles concerning, but not

limited to, such issues as publication, ownership, usage, and consultation. It was stated that, in essence, we were creating a treaty.[4]

I asserted that we needed to create a visual of everyone's independent interests and then look for divergences and convergences. Where there were convergences we began to group them into categories, funnelling down through the process until we had a concise document that represented the interests of all parties. Where there were divergences, we considered whether they were stand-alone issues, a unique category unto themselves, or whether they needed to be addressed within the scope of the MOU. Brock's legal representative was reluctant to participate and reticent during the dialogue and quite clearly expressed that she felt outside her element.

The fact that Brock's legal representative felt out of her element became even more apparent when we received her first draft of the framework for the MOU. It was very linear and hierarchical in reflecting the standard position in academia that the Principal Investigator has exclusive rights to and ownership over the research and its findings. We realized that if we were going to do things differently, then they had to be reflected in the changes we made to the MOU. The MOU was a reflection of our struggles to reflect and represent the two worlds equitably. We reordered definitions and principles to privilege community interests and used the circle metaphor to conceptualize equity in collaborative knowledge building, consultation, and consensus building. Defining terms such as consensus, Indigenous knowledge, and intellectual property rights was particularly complex.

The Position of an Insider Researcher

As I consider the multilayered role that I have taken on and the dynamics of the relationships that developed during the course of this project, I was taken aback at times by the realization that I was no longer simply a community member working for the betterment of my community; I was an academic and a researcher, and as such, whether consciously or un-

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4   A treaty is a mutually approved agreement between disparate groups or nations as to how they will interact with one another. The agreement can take on various physical forms that represent the agreement such as the creation of a wampum belt or a signed document.

consciously, my community saw me through the same lens as other outside researchers and academics. These dynamics were very subjective, emotionally saturated, and influenced by previously established relationships and knowledge of the dynamics of the community in which I reside. This type of research relationship requires that I, as both an insider and outsider, be engaged in consistent reflexivity. As Smith (1999) writes: "One of the difficult risks insider researchers take is to 'test' their own taken-for-granted views about their community" (p. 139). It is exceedingly difficult and disorienting to be simultaneously connected to and disconnected from a community. What I have found is that I had to establish new ways of relating to individuals with whom I engaged in research.

Challenging the long established constructs of both academic and community views on research is not an easy endeavour and one that has placed me in the awkward and uncomfortable position of standing my ground in privileging community needs while simultaneously balancing the requirements that academia imposes on researchers. One way to accomplish this monumental task is to build and sustain a network of supportive relationships that support collaborative, community-based action research both in the community and within academia, with individuals who are willing to be educated on the issues, social phenomena, and traditional values relating to the particular culture-sharing group being researched. In recognizing our moral and spiritual responsibilities to our ancestors, to community, and to the university, the MOU has become a tacit example of that journey.

LISTENING AND LEARNING IN THE SPACE (*DAWN WITH SHEILA*)[5]

The non-Aboriginal Perspective

In the fall of 2006, I received a phone call from John Hodson of Brock's Tecumseh Centre inviting me to meet with the *Student Success* community partners group. John explained that the group had approached Brock to locate a faculty member to assist in applying for funding and conducting research. Having a working relationship with the Tecumseh Centre

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[5]   In all cases "I" is Dawn speaking but was written with input from Sheila and as such represents both our experiences

and John Hodson since 2004 made discussing the new project much easier. The Tecumseh Centre was familiar with how I engaged in research, my openness to taking advice and guidance, and my familiarity with the levels of support and encouragement provided by the Tecumseh Centre. We had frank conversations that were necessary to initiate the project and already had a relationship of mutual trust and respect on which to build. We agreed that I would travel with the Tecumseh representatives to a meeting of the community consortium and that I would also invite another faculty member to join us and become involved in the project.

I approached Sheila Bennett with whom I have worked since 1999. Her knowledge of education systems, experience at the pre-service level of education, and her research skills made her an invaluable addition to the project. I also had great faith in her ability to challenge her own notions of how to conduct research, and in her openness to work within different paradigms. At this point, I had no idea how challenging the project would become on multiple levels, but after some discussions, Sheila agreed to attend the meeting and "audition" as she put it, for the community consortium. In this section of our article, Sheila and I share our reflections of how the audition went and the journey that has taken place up until the writing of this article, as we are on the verge of conducting the first focus groups.

It is important to understand the backdrop against which our experiences have been set. Like many universities, Brock has added an emphasis on community-based research and community collaboration to its range of research activities. Large funding organizations like SSHRC, who funded the present research, have developed specialized grants to encourage not only more collaborative research with communities but also more diverse and quicker methods of dissemination. In addition to these realities, we both worked in departments that encourage strong community involvement and we were both preparing dossiers for tenure and promotion. In my case, I was applying for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor and Sheila was applying to become a Full Professor. Each of us was involved in other research projects in addition to our regular duties of teaching and supervision, and Sheila was serving as the Chair for her department. Unknown to everyone involved, I was also trying to balance the plan of a winter pregnancy in the overall scheme of

committing to another project that would demand time during my maternity leave.

Despite our other commitments, we attended the "audition" and met with the community consortium. The meeting, which was held in the Six Nations at Ganohkwasra's Healing and Wellness Centre , served not only to introduce the two of us to the community consortium but also to identify the areas of focus for the planned research grant application. From the moment we walked into the room, it was clear that we were outsiders and that it would truly be an audition. The tone and approach of the meeting was different from other research meetings that we had attended through Brock University. What was particularly striking was the circular aspect of the meeting, the lack of linear structures, and the personal aspect of the conversations.

Everyone at the meeting introduced themselves and their roles, including those as parents and community members, in addition to their professions and the organizations that each represented. It was an unusual experience to have the interest in who we were as individuals and not just in what professional skills we had to offer the project. The individuals at the meeting were very welcoming and we seemed to connect by the end of the meeting. There were exceptions, most notably two representatives from community schools who felt that we had already decided that the schools were to blame. We were frank about not being sure what the research would reveal and noted that elements of both home and school life would likely be found to play a role. These two representatives from community schools heard our comments about school environments as being easier to change than home environments and interpreted those comments as schools being at fault, and not as schools being the ideal way of reaching students. This confusion caused some conflict but it was agreed that we would proceed with the application and work collaboratively together. We agreed that the application process would be kept open and transparent.

At this meeting Sheila and I first met Sandra Styres, and we agreed that I would work with her to develop a draft of the grant proposal that would be shared with others, modified, and submitted. During the meeting, I outlined the process involved and the information that would be needed from the consortium. After Sandra and I worked through the

draft, we shared it with the other parties. Sandra was also responsible for gathering signatures and other needed documentation from the community. Because much of the drafting of the grant took place at Brock (although based on information from many meetings with the community partners) under a very tight timeline, the preparation of the grant did not reflect how much this project would come to vary from and often challenge more traditional forms and procedures associated with academic research. Preparing the grant proposal did not pose many challenges other than the usual gathering of materials. The meeting had caused some reflection in terms of being white, non-Aboriginal, and privileged but the grant process did not.

While waiting to hear back about the grant, we held some planning meetings. These meetings, which gave everyone a chance to get to know one another better, served to bring forward questions about collaborative research and capacity building. The consensus within the community consortium was that they were tired of identifying an issue only to have a solution thrown at it, or implementing a program to address it as a quick fix. In the conversations that took place before Sheila and I were involved, the various community organizations realized that they were seeing different elements of the same issue and wanted to take a step back and examine the issue before trying to develop ways of addressing it. This willingness to step back and take things slower combined with forming a consortium of community partners was significant in building capacity within the community. However, it now brought forth the question of how to build research capacity and how exactly collaborative research would work. These questions continued to be challenges throughout the project.

It was very simple to say that everyone would be involved in everything but that kind of approach was not feasible or effective. Sheila and I found ourselves continually questioning our roles and responsibilities in terms of building capacity in the community and engaging in authentic and collaborative ways. I started using the metaphor of the circle to describe how everyone in the project would work together. Based on this metaphor, when the research group met, we thought of ourselves as sitting in a circle and each of us contributing something to the project in various ways. The circle reflected that everyone brought something val-

uable to the project and yet no one person's contribution was more valued than someone else's. This conceptualization started to shape how we could collaborate towards a common purpose.

The issue of capacity building was more challenging because it did not make sense to work through every element of a proposal or ethics application with the entire group nor did many of the members find this to be a worthwhile use of their time. At the same time, SSHRC had specifically designed the grant to support preliminary research with a major emphasis on developing the collaborative framework between a community and a university necessary to build capacity in the community and engage in larger scale collaborative research projects. It was necessary to walk a fine line between overwhelming individual members of the consortium with the minute details of the application process, together with doing enough within the group to provide opportunities for mutual learning.

The idea of mutual learning is important because it is central to the conceptualization of our research team as a circle. In the circle metaphor, everyone comes into the circle and all contributions are valued and shared. Unlike a more traditional linear approach in which the "professionals" come into a partnership with the community to address community needs, the circle metaphor indicates that there will be mutual knowledge sharing and capacity building. We continue to struggle with making effective use of everyone's time while ensuring that research capacity is being built within the community and that community perspectives inform and guide the research.

For the ethics process, we reached a middle ground wherein a few people focused on preparing the applications and then the group at large was provided with an opportunity to review and provide feedback on the documents. During a subsequent meeting the entire group reviewed the ethics applications and discussed associated ethical issues. This meeting provided an opportunity to build capacity in the community partners and have them contribute their knowledge and experience so that collaboratively we could establish the best way to proceed with the research. There were some questions that the community members needed to answer and many questions that we as a consortium needed to think through together.

This project required that the group apply to the Brock University Research Ethics Board and to the Six Nations Ethics Committee (a committee of the Six Nations Council) for approval to conduct the research. In the preparation of the grant, Sandra and I had sketched out what the project would look like and introduced the HRM (Hodson, 2007; Styres, 2008) as the framework that would shape the research procedures. The HRM was selected due to the importance of using a culturally sensitive approach and not using traditional academic research methods. However, because it was an approach that was unfamiliar to me I opted to draft the Brock ethics application so that I would have an opportunity to work out how the approach would shape the data collection activities. During this process when I had to outline exactly how the interaction with research participants would take place, I found my preconceived notions of how to conduct research and how to operate in a collaborative framework were most challenged.

The fit of the HRM approach was immediately apparent. It provided researchers and research participants' time to meet and become comfortable with each other as well as setting a foundation for mutual exchanges and knowledge sharing. Designing research interactions based on this approach, and adding in multiple opportunities for participants to validate or challenge interpretations of their knowledge sharing, made me question traditional approaches to research. In some ways, the change that academic research made from using the terminology *research subject* to *research participant* highlights some of the questioning that the ethics process triggered. For me the term *research subject* really identifies the experiences that Aboriginal communities have experienced when non-Aboriginal researchers came in and conducted research that was based in the community but their frame of reference saw the community as the passive subject that needed to be excavated to extract knowledge and then to deliver answers with no active participation on the part of community members. The term *research participant* comes much closer because it recognizes active participation in the discovery and understanding of knowledge.

The ethics process and the tenure and promotion process caused me to realize just how entrenched some of these ideas about research were and who holds or owns research within university contexts. Universities

are based on very linear and stratified structures; advancement is based on an individual's research output in combination with teaching and service provided. Although collaborative research is encouraged within the university sector, it requires significantly more time and effort, generally producing fewer measurable research outputs over a longer period of time. Academic success is still measured at an institutional level in terms of how many peer-reviewed articles are available in the library for other academics who know how to access them and not in terms of developing relationships, building community knowledge, effecting positive changes in communities, or the policies that affect those communities.

Questioning the Role of Principal Investigator. In my role as principal investigator, the present project caused me to question the premise on which the principal investigator is based. Collaborative research seems at odds with the term *principal investigator* because the term introduces a hierarchical ordering into a process that is supposed to be based on mutual learning that does not involve valuing one individual's knowledge as more important than another individual's knowledge. Throughout this project, I have been, and continue to be, engaged in a balancing act between my responsibilities as a principal investigator to the ethics boards, the funding agency, and the university with my commitment to the collaborative research team we had established.

Ironically, my determination to balance these responsibilities and commitments was challenged during the tenure and promotion process in which Sheila and I were engaged. As I was preparing ethics, I was faced with questions about the types of research in which I was engaged and how much of these activities could be attributed to me and how much to others. During this process of questioning, it became clear that elements within the university either did not value collaborative research, or did not know how to make it fit into the rigid structures of traditional academic research to reduce it to so many points or to weigh and measure it. It was my perception that some university structures were sending a message that collaborative research was not valued and that if a project were not going to generate peer-reviewed articles in a timely fashion, that project should not be pursued. It was ironic that at a time when this project was challenging the ideas that I held about re-

search, I should also be challenged about the project that I was pursuing and its value in the academic world. It was a turning point where I could have rejected all the introspection that I engaged in about research and moved back into safer, more traditional models – instead I became even more determined to conduct collaborative research that held meaning and purpose outside the traditional research approach.

Completing the ethics application for Brock and the Six Nations Ethics Committee, after having experienced some of the more archaic structures of the university, left me more determined to ensure that the structures within this research project reflected the collaborative nature of the research and did not replicate the hierarchical structures within the university. Each ethics committee had points of clarification that we were asked to address, but only the Six Nations Ethics Committee invited us to appear before them and clarify the project.

My daughter was seven weeks old when we were scheduled to meet with the ethics committee. The meeting took place in Council chambers, and due to our numbers (Michelle, Sandra, myself – Dawn, and a community partner, and the baby), we were seated at the council table instead of at the small table where those appearing before this committee were normally placed. We were then invited to present the research without any clear direction as to how to proceed. Thankfully, Sandra had e-mailed around the clarification questions that the ethics committee had sent to us and we had broken up the questions between Sandra, Michelle, and me, based on who was best positioned to answer the questions during the meeting. Various members of the research team contributed to the answers that we assembled through e-mail. The resulting document that Sandra drafted served to guide our presentation. As we proceeded through each point of clarification, the committee asked questions and provided input into the direction that we were taking. In the end we had a very meaningful exchange of ideas about how the research should be conducted, owned, and shared.

The informal conversations that we had afterwards were in some ways the most informative. Many committee members came over to see the baby and to engage in general conversation. At that time, I became aware that individuals from Brock and other universities were conducting research in the Six Nations community without applying to the Six

Nations ethics committee for approval. During the proceedings, I had been struck by the professionalism and the dedication of the ethics committee. The fact that they were aware that others at Brock were ignoring their committee and yet they did not allow that information to influence how the ethics submission for the present project was handled further increased my respect for their organization and their members.

The idea that researchers and graduate students affiliated with Brock would ignore or be unaware of the Six Nations ethics process needed investigation. I found out that, although Brock's ethics board routinely recommended that researchers and graduate students seek the approval of the Six Nations ethics board, the Brock ethics board had no power to enforce the jurisdiction of any other research ethics board. In addition, Brock's board was having difficulty deciding what to do when presented with the argument that an individual would not apply to the Six Nations Ethics Committee because it was part of an elected council and the individual only supported the hereditary council. Thus, individuals could present the argument that because the elected council was against everything that they believed in, they should not be compelled to apply to the ethics committee for approval. The incident served to emphasize how ill-prepared university structures are to address the complex issues associated with community-based and collaborative research, especially when that research is situated within an Aboriginal community.

The Position of the Outside Researcher

Throughout this project, Sheila and I have had many conversations about the challenges we face as white researchers and as outsiders. It is clear that we can never be anything other than outsiders or that we can ever have a true understanding of Aboriginal experiences. For example, politics are inescapable, and throughout the project there have been instances where group politics played a role. Being witness to these occasions has resulted in our questioning when politics are just politics and when they are uniquely informed by the Aboriginal experience. The value of our work has been challenged at multiple levels; our own preconceived notions about research and how it should be conducted have been turned upside down. Sheila has mentioned that at times she is struck by how great a divide there is between the experiences represented in this

collaboration even while we are all united because we care about the youth and their future.

We are working towards creating a space where we can work together as equals, build bridges of understanding, and consecrate a new form of relationship. The MOU is one way in which we can make a difference and begin to define the ethical space that will guide us in our attempt to walk between two worlds. As Sandra has discussed, the process of developing the MOU has assisted us in identifying the values and principles that will guide us, as well as opening on all sides an avenue, for more discussion and capacity building. Within the first year of the project we gained a wealth of shared knowledge about how to build collaborative, community-based, research initiatives and to recognize that we are responsible for creating and shaping the ethical space for the present project as well as defending that space from those who would see it diminished in some way.

ENGAGING ETHICAL SPACE: WALKING IN TWO WORLDS

Ermine (2005) discusses the cultural tensions that exist when researchers attempt to engage ethical space. The dialogue emerging from our voices illustrates the tensions brought to bear as each individual sought to work through her respective grief, disconnectedness, and disorientation arising out of the chaos of having her own unique constructs violently shaken and, at times admittedly, turned completely upside down and inside out. The dialogue arising out of this chaos can at times become contentious. Within the discomfort of the contention, the contrasts between the two worldviews are revealed. From the vantage point of this contrast, a space is simultaneously created.

As Smith (1999) has asserted "the spaces within the research domain through which indigenous research can operate are small spaces on shifting ground. Negotiating and transforming institutional practices and research frameworks is as significant as the carrying out of actual research programmes" (p. 140). Many times throughout this process each individual represented in this article has, from her own unique perspective, revealed her frustrations and concerns at the exceedingly slow pace of negotiating, forming, and transforming relationships through the HRM model of conceptualizing research within community. However, it

is undoubtedly a long and difficult process to challenge those long-established and deep-rooted norms within individuals, community, and the academe. Although the space opens up infinite possibilities for cross-cultural relations, it also provides a mechanism for observing how hidden motives, principles, and agendas can unintentionally frame interactions as well as how events and dialogue are being interpreted.

Smith (1999) has written: "Many community projects require intensive community input. The implications of such input for impoverished communities or communities under stress can be enormous" (p. 140). We can see the stress on community involvement as individuals working in organizations represented in this consortium and whose resources both human and financial are constrained by egregious Federal policies, are already stretched beyond acceptable limits. Throughout this process, the community itself has become an ethical space where the consortium can meet together with minimal inconvenience to the consortium's commun-ity members, rather than insisting on meeting at the university which is a considerable distance from the community; where the financial resources of the research process are being poured into the community by accessing such services as restaurants, catering, gas stations, variety stores, meeting rooms, accommodations, supplies, nd other sundry services; and building capacity in community by stipulating that the research assistants and graduate students working on the project will come from the community. It also means that while making every effort to include the consortium in all processes related to the project, we are also mindful of the extra taxation of their human capital being placed upon them due to their involvement in this project.

The Ethics Committee presentation was a space that was at times contentious and always contrasted by multiplex worldviews as evidenced through the heated and controversial dialogue on issues relating to religion, culture, and ethical practices both within the community and academe. Similarly, the development of the MOU was an ethical space where disparate groups came together to determine how they would interact in a moral and ethical manner. It became clear to us through our experiences with the Ethics Committee and in developing the MOU that space is organic because it is not linear and compartmental, but rather, it is iterative, evolving, changing, moving, and reforming. Ethical space was created and re-created as we engaged it, co-created it, re-defined it, and re-engaged it. Ethical space is sacred, spiritual, engaging, ambiguous, and challenging. It will simultaneously bring us to our knees in humility and raise us up to new heights of under-

standing and awareness in creating collaborative knowledge systems no longer based on colonialist notions of domination, power, control, and usury, but rather on mutuality, egalitarianism, shared knowledge, and a new way of relating.

"*It's a gift to walk in two worlds, but also a responsibility.*

 Ethical space does not exist unless you look at it, affirm it." (Ford, 2008, p. 1)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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