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THESIS

Drum Song and Spirit Mask: A multiple–
eyed seeing Indigenous methodological
framework for ethical documentary
filmmaking

CREATIVE PROJECT

Drum Song: The Rhythm of Life

documentary trailer, treatment one sheet, and slide deck

By Kelly Moneymaker

A thesis and exegesis submitted to Te Kunenga Ki Purehuroa (Massey University) in Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington) on Te Ati Awa (traditional Māori lands) of Aotearoa (New Zealand) in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Creative Enterprise (MCE) within Te Rewa O Puanga (the School of Music and Creative Media Production).

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores cultural meaning-making in documentary filmmaking as a process that places storytelling in local hands by positioning the filmmaker as a listener-facilitator to find a space for mutual knowing between Western and Indigenous worldviews. The critical analysis applies an Indigenous, comparative decolonial lens to Multiple-eyed Seeing as it relates to creative arts practice and Indigenous methodologies that empower local Native voices to challenge popular conventions in documentary production. Creative arts pedagogies are studied while working with a transcultural framework, drawing upon Indigenous guiding principles of Inupiat, Māori, and Samoan peoples. Research methods include community-based participatory action research (CB-PAR), autoethnography, narrative reflection; and co-creative processes of collaborating with Elders, localhost, and crew members. This all grounds the ethical pursuit of cultural restoration, empowerment, self-determination, reciprocity, and agentic representation. This work is meant to support others wishing to co-create media with Indigenous communities. I submit this thesis to reclaim Indigenous voices through the process of documentary filmmaking.

Keywords (and Problematic Terminology)

Indigenous, indigenous knowledges, knowledge-holders, two-eyed seeing, multiple-eyed seeing, decolonization, Native, localhost, autoethnography

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The research for this thesis was co-created alongside Indigenous and science communities across Alaska. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the knowledge-holders for trusting and welcoming my team into their communities. We will continue to "show face" by being Native community allies. It has been an honor and a privilege to learn from you.

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Introduction

Indigenous media production is like a contemporary talking stick that creates space for diverse experiences, perspectives, and stories to be shared both within and between communities at great distances. Combined with the forces of globalization, Indigenous media production is a medium that can facilitate autonomous media representation and carries the potential to open up spaces for one to imagine different world views.¹

A century after its release, the silent documentary film, *Nanook of the North* (dir. J. Flaherty, 1922) is still considered a benchmark of cultural documentary work² and "a predecessor to the modern documentary."³ It is the opening contention of this thesis, however, that the conventions of Western documentary filmmaking, foreshadowed by *Nanook of the North*, leave a potentially damaging legacy. From an Indigenous filmmaking perspective, Flaherty's film offers an inauthentic representation of Inuit life and is more concerned with the promotion of fur trading than the pursuit of knowledge. It could be argued that the film, despite its countless accolades, "flies in the face" of three critical documentary requirements outlined by film scholar, Bill Nichols: documentaries are about reality, real people, and they tell stories about what really happened.⁴ While *Nanook of the North* has been lauded as "the most celebrated instance of the strange made familiar,"⁵ Nichols' assertions that the film demonstrates conventions that comprise cultural value within documentary filmmaking do not, I suggest, meet the needs or interests of Indigenous peoples and their stories. It is the assertion of this thesis that,

¹ Rebeka Tabobondung, "Indigenous Perspectives on Globalization: Self-Determination through Autonomous Media Creation," in *Indigenous Peoples and Autonomy: Insights for a Global Age*, ed. Mario Blaser et al. (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2010), 130-147.

² Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*. 3rd ed. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2017), 49-50.

³ Robert J. Flaherty, dir., *Nanook of the North*, (Paris: Revillon Frères, 1922), https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0013427/?ref_=nv_sr_srsrg_0.

⁴ Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary*, 49-50.

⁵ Bill Nichols, *Documentary and the Coming of Sound*, Filmsound.org, accessed August 14, 2022, <http://filmsound.org/film-sound-history/documentary.htm>.

more broadly, Western approaches to cultural storytelling risk perpetuating distortions of our histories, stories, and representation⁶. While Nichols and other writers commend the critical value of *Nanook of the North*, and the conversations it established, I contend - as an Indigenous filmmaker and woman of color - that a "Multiple-eyed Seeing"⁷ approach offers a valuable pathway to the decolonization of Indigenous stories on screen.

I am a Native American¹ (via my American Samoan genealogy and birth-adoptive Inupiat identity) female researcher on a cultural reclamation and restoration mission. While operating within often deeply Western paradigms of academic and creative practice, I am reconnecting with my history, ancestors, and lands. Balancing this work has led me to use Multiple-eyed Seeing⁸ as a journey of service for my communities as we pursue Indigenous sovereignty and right to self-determination. Although I am writing within the context of a Western-based academic practice, the research has been co-created and led by the Indigenous peoples in communities across Alaska.

My recent research experience has revealed that conventional Western media practices can lead to disrespectful engagement with Native peoples. These infringements can create barriers to filming due to villagers becoming "anti-media". I recognize the impacts of Western filmmaking conventions as potential barriers to mutual understanding. Indigenous peoples have long term knowledge of the land and sea⁹; scientists have data collection systems in place. We have much to learn from each other. My research question asks, "How is it possible to create a

⁶ Jo-ann Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014).

⁷ ⁸Cheryl Bartlett et al., "Two-Eyed Seeing and Other Lessons Learned within a Co-Learning Journey of Bringing Together Indigenous and Mainstream Knowledges and Ways of Knowing," *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences* 2 (2012): 331-340. <https://www.iaac-aeic.gc.ca/050/documents/p80156/132968E.pdf>

⁹ Eve Tuck, Marcia McKenzie, and Kate McCoy, "Land Education: Indigenous, Post-Colonial, and Decolonizing Perspectives on Place and Environmental Education Research," *Environmental Education Research* 20, no. 1 (February 2014): pp. 1-23, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2013.877708>.

¹ Nicole Hurst and Vanessa Garcia Vazquez, "Bureau of Indian Affairs: Terminology and Language" *Libguides*, Utah State University BIA Collection (June 25, 2024), <https://libguides.usu.edu/biacollection>

space to support mutual knowing between Western and Indigenous worldviews by using an Indigenous methodological framework¹⁰ for documentary filmmaking"? Before we explore the research, I would like to provide my background as a Native American scholar and filmmaker, and why I have been propelled to study decolonial frameworks for creative media production.

Indigenous Introduction: Holding the Drum

A formal cultural introduction is an example of an Indigenous Research framework through Indigenous research methodology and autoethnography.¹¹ My English name is Kelly MoneyMaker; my surname was derived from paternal German ancestors who minted gold and it was directly translated from Geldmacher to MoneyMaker when my great-grandfather arrived in the United States. My grandfather, Paul MoneyMaker, married an Iñupiaq woman, Hazel Myrtle Beltz of Sitnasuaq (Nome), Alaska (Alyaska), on the Bering Strait territories of Inupiat, Central Yu'pik and Siberian Yu'pik Peoples. Paul and Hazel's son, John Henry was born near Nome, and I was adopted by him and his Irish-Italian wife, Florence Mary, at birth and raised in Fairbanks near Troth Yedda¹² in traditional unceded territories of the Lower Tanana Dene Peoples (Kokht'ana) and the Dena'ina Peoples.¹³ I now reside in the unceded lands of the Eklutna Dena'ina Peoples of Dgheyey Kaq' (Anchorage), Alyaska (Aleut word meaning "greater land").¹⁴

¹⁰ Cindy Peltier, "An Application of Two-Eyed Seeing: Indigenous Research Methods with Participatory Action Research," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 17, no. 1 (2018).

¹¹ Onowa McIvor, "I am my Subject: Blending Indigenous Research Methodology and Autoethnography Through Integrity-Based, Spirit-Based Research," *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 1, no. 33 (2010): 137-155; Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Fernwood Publishing Co Ltd, (2008); Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*. (Kindle, Fernwood Pub., 2020).

¹² Gary Holton, "Alaska Native Language Relationships and Family Trees: Language Relationships," Alaska Native Language Center, University of Alaska Fairbanks, n.d., 125.

¹³ "The Dena'ina people," Anchorage Convention & Visitors Bureau DBA Visit Anchorage, n.d.

¹⁴ Alaska Division of State Libraries and Museums, ed. *Alaska Blue Book* (Juneau, AK: Alaska Division of State Libraries and Museums, 1993).

My genealogical maternal great-grandmother was a taupou (ceremonial hostess chosen by the village high chief) from the Tago family of Solosolo on Upolu Island in the Independent State of Samoa. Her daughter Nofoaefiaosamoa Tago Leota married Tiafu Ah Hing and gave birth to thirteen children. The eldest, my biological mother, Uailove'aisiauamio (Filipina Uoilove'a Ah Hing), was born in Nu'uuli, Samoa Amelika (American Samoa).¹⁵

The negative impacts of colonization on both sides of my family have propelled me to investigate not only our histories but ways of healing forward.¹⁶ I acknowledge and honor the ancestral land stewardship¹⁷ and place-based knowledge of all Indigenous Peoples.¹⁸ I position myself as a Native American researcher and scholar, and I submit this thesis to reclaim Indigenous voices through the process of documentary filmmaking. I push against traditional filmmaking conventions, which apply a Western Anthropological lens that treats Indigenous subjects as observable or "other" by offering an alternative approach that uses decolonial theoretical frameworks with a critical perspective on colonization, capitalism, and patriarchy.¹⁹ In this way, I am aligning with my biological Samoan mother's and adoptive Alaskan Native father's ancestors who lived inside the drum by following the natural rhythms of cycles, seasons, and animal migrations for millennium. Their ancestors were the knowledge holders who held the drum for future generations.

¹⁵ Evelyn Ah Hing Faaiuas, Facebook message to author, (June 12, 2019).

¹⁶ "U.S. takes possession of Alaska," History.com, last modified October 20, 2021; Wikipedia, "Tripartite Convention," last modified March 24, 2022.

¹⁷ J. Starr, "Map of New Zealand's Māori Iwi (Tribes)," Evolving Newsroom (Ministry of New Zealand Trade and Enterprise, May 24, 2021), <https://evolvingnewsroom.co.nz/map-of-new-zealands-maori-iwi-tribes/>.

¹⁸ Jenna Kunze, "Whose Land are you on? This App Will Show you Which Indigenous Territory you're on," Native News Online, posted March 26, 2021; "TKM: Home: Te Kahui Mangai: Te Kahui Mangai: Directory of Iwi and Māori Organisations: Te Kahui Mangai," Te Puni Kokiri, Ministry of Māori Development, n.d.

¹⁹ Margaret Kovach, "Emerging from the Margins: Indigenous Methodologies," in *Research as Resistance: Revisiting Critical, Indigenous, and Anti-Oppressive Approaches*, ed. Susan Strega, and Leslie Brown (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 2015), 43-64.

Pertinent research experience onboard the vaka

I approach the critical work within this research by first reflecting on my own filmmaking experience in 2019. I had the honor of directing a short documentary about the Tokelauan peoples' combined use of cultural wisdom and modern eco-technologies in response to climate change-related issues.²⁰ The film was produced in cooperation with the Tokelauan peoples, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, New Zealand (MFAT), the Ministry of Climate, Oceans, Resilience, and Environment Tokelau, (MiCORE), and Massey University's Te Kunenga Ki Purehuroa College of Creative Arts (CoCA).

While in Tokelau, conflicts unfolded between one of my peers, a student filmmaker, and community knowledge-holders. The student was unaware of the negative impact he was making by cementing distrust between the researchers and the researched. Our university Cultural Advisor intervened to ask, "What kind of documentary filmmaker do you want to be?"²¹ which deeply resonated with me. Shared Indigenous values and systems thinking between Pacifica peoples and Native Alaskans, and shared concerns regarding colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy²² began to weave together like sinew around a drum, motivating me to pursue an idea for an Indigenous methodological framework. This led to community-based participatory

²⁰ Kelly MoneyMaker, dir., *Vaka*, 9 December 2019, YouTube video. 22:38 min. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZkIlu4DJUQ>

²¹ Herbert Bartley, In conversation on the atolls of Tokelau, 2019.

²² Jen Gobby, Rebecca Sinclair, and Rachel Ivy, "Decolonizing Climate Policy," Indigenous Climate Action (Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change (PCF), A Healthy Economy (HEHE), March 2021), <https://www.indigenousclimateaction.com/programs/decolonizing-climate-policy>.

action research (CBPAR) filmmaking in Alaska²³ for this thesis.²⁴ I prepared for the film by researching the works of others, unfolding methods that might inform or contribute to the development of my own filmmaking methodology. I share selected works from this secondary research in the literature review that follows.

The Literature Review

This literature review explores trans-disciplinary researchers, writers, and media content creators whose works align with my research philosophy and methodology as an Indigenous filmmaker. "A literature review can be framed as a creative process, one in which the knower is an active participant constructing an interpretation of the community and its discourse, rather than a mere bystander who attempts to reproduce, as best she or he can, the relevant authors and works".²⁵ An Indigenous way of looking at a literature review would be a *sharing circle*, gathering people and unique perspectives for knowledge sharing or a *drum song circle* where stories are shared as a creative inquiry for community benefit.²⁶ In the research community, this may be interpreted as community-based participatory action research (CBPAR)--a vehicle for social transformation²⁷.

²³ Hazel Smith, "Smith, Hazel and Dean, Roger T. - Practice-Led Research, Research-Led Practice in the Creative Arts," ed. Roger T. Deans, Scribd (Edinburgh University Press, 2009), <https://www.scribd.com/doc/91269904/Smith-Hazel-and-Dean-Roger-T-Practice-Led-Research-Research-Led-Practice-in-the-Creative-Arts>.

²⁴ "Indigenous adaptations to climate change explored at cop26 event." Massey University of New Zealand. Posted November 10, 2021. <https://www.massey.ac.nz/about/news/indigenous-adaptations-to-climate-change-explored-at-cop26-event/>.

²⁵ Alfonso Montuori, "Literature Review as Creative Inquiry," *Journal of Transformative Education* 3, no. 4 (2005): 374-93.

²⁶ Gwen Healey Akearok et al., "Exploring the Term 'Resilience' in Arctic Health and Well-Being Using a Sharing Circle as a Community-Centered Approach: Insights from a Conference Workshop," *Social Sciences* 8, no. 2 (2019).

²⁷ Fran Baum et al., "Participatory Action Research," *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health* 60, no. 10 (2006): 854-57.

Toward a community-based approach to research

Various writers describe "community-based participatory action research principles"²⁸ as those that "promote co-learning and capacity building" and conduct work in "collaborative, equitable partnerships."²⁹ Relevant to my own research, this connects with *sharing circles* in the Northwest Arctic region of Alaska which aimed to research community priorities for context-based cancer education³⁰. The community co-created a framework relevant to their own communities through sharing stories, visuals, relationship building and personal knowledge. CBPAR acknowledges Indigenous Ways of Knowing³¹ since it "affirms that experience can be a basis of knowing and that experiential learning can lead to a legitimate form of knowledge that influences practice".³²

With reference to *sharing circles*, integrating CBPAR and Indigenous Knowledge illustrates reciprocity when researchers share knowledge through processes of "seeking consent, collaborating, co-authoring, acknowledging, communicating in local tongues, honoring Indigenous cultures, capacity building via mentoring and scholarships and celebrating with their co-researchers in culturally steeped ways"³³ to ensure that "the researched benefit from the research".³⁴

²⁸ Baum et al., *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 854-57.

²⁹ Lourdes Cueva Chacón et al., "Stronger and Safer Together: Motivations for and Challenges of (Trans)National Collaboration in Investigative Reporting in Latin America," *Digital Journalism* 9, no. 2 (2020): 196-214.

³⁰ Healey Akearok et al., "Exploring the Term 'Resilience'", 45.

³¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1972); Gregory Cajete, *Look to the Mountain an Ecology of Indigenous Education* (Durango: Kivaki Press, 1994).

³² Catherine D. Nugent, "David A. Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (the Experiential Learning Cycle)," Handout, American Board of Examiners in Psychodrama, Sociometry & Group Psychotherapy, April 2018. <https://www.lptipsychodrama.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/abe-kolb-summary-05-03-2018.pdf>.

³³ Lynn F. Lavallée, "Practical Application of an Indigenous Research Framework and Two Qualitative Indigenous Research Methods: Sharing Circles and Anishnaabe Symbol-Based Reflection," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 21-40.

³⁴ Moyra Keane, "Decolonising Methodology: Who Benefits from Indigenous Knowledge Research?" *Educational Research for Social Change* 6, no. 1 (2017): 12-24.

Other writers cite a further co-creative capacity building strategy in the form of Tribal Participatory Research which includes "mechanisms for tribal oversight, the use of a facilitator, the training and employing of community members as project staff, and the use of culturally specific assessment and intervention methods that are grounded in underlying principles that guide the relationship between Alaska Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) tribes and other entities."³⁵ Thinking about my own research, I recognize that the Native communities my team worked alongside shared similar ethics, means and parameters that aligned with the co-creative, meaningful goals for this project.

Toward a methodology for healing through multiple eyes

The goals of community-focused research are contrary to those established within dominant, Eurocentric methods and narratives, through which colonization has created intergenerational trauma and a general mistrust of researchers and documentary filmmaking.³⁶ As a Native American filmmaker, I am propelled to find a space for healing decolonization. Linda Tuhiwai Smith flags research as a "dirty word" for Indigenous peoples³⁷ as evidence that "being researched" in the past was to be colonized, and research should make a "positive difference for the researched" as part of Kaupapa Māori principles.³⁸ Peltier reflects that "Respectful and ethical research should be underscored for Indigenous peoples because of these

³⁵ Philip A. Fisher et al. "Tribal Participatory Research: Mechanisms of a Collaborative Model," *American Journal of Community Psychology* 32, no. 3-4 (December 2003): 207-16.

³⁶ Raven Sinclair, "Aboriginal Social Work Education in Canada: Decolonizing Pedagogy for the Seventh Generation," *First Peoples' Child and Family Review* 1, no. 1 (2020): 49-61.

³⁷ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. (London, UK: Zed Books, 2012).

³⁸ Graham Hingangaroa Smith, "Principles of Kaupapa Māori," Rangahau, n.d., <http://www.rangahau.co.nz/rangahau/27/>.

past experiences".³⁹ I've attempted to remove the "dirty word" connotation from my research by using a comparative critical lens embodying multiple Indigenous Guiding Principles while working in close cooperation with Native communities.

In *Creating Digital Resonance*, Jennifer Deger cites Tarek Elhaik, who says "We ought to cultivate another logic: I study Y not to enact a cultural critique of X where I am from, but to do something with Y, yet to be formulated, that will be named Z. X is not bracketed, mourned, and a source of colonial guilt".⁴⁰ Elhaik's formula provides a positive pathway for finding a mutual space between knowledge systems since it allows one to look forward rather than relive colonizer-induced past trauma. In my research project, X refers to western data collection systems, Y is the comparative decolonial lens (Multiple-eyed Seeing) and Z is mutual knowing via CBPR providing opportunities for discourse and healing.

Mason Durie offers an opportunity for healing via interfacing by integrating different knowledge systems to create new knowledge based on mutual respect, reciprocity, human dignity, and discovery principles. "For all research, ultimately the outcomes of new knowledge are measured by gains in economic growth, environmental sustainability, social wellbeing, and cultural integrity with an understanding that outcomes may depend on cultural specificities, such as an increase in land or access to culturally significant resources".⁴¹

³⁹ Peltier, "An Application of Two-Eyed Seeing."

⁴⁰ Jennifer Deger, "Curating Digital Resonance," in *The Routledge Companion to Digital Ethnography*, ed. Larissa Hjorth et al. (New York, NY: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 344-354; Tarek Elhaik, "What Is Contemporary Anthropology?" *Critical Arts* 27, no. 6, (2013): 784-98.

⁴¹ Mason Durie, "Understanding Health and Illness: Research at the Interface between Science and Indigenous Knowledge," *International Journal of Epidemiology* 33, no. 5 (2004): 1138-43.

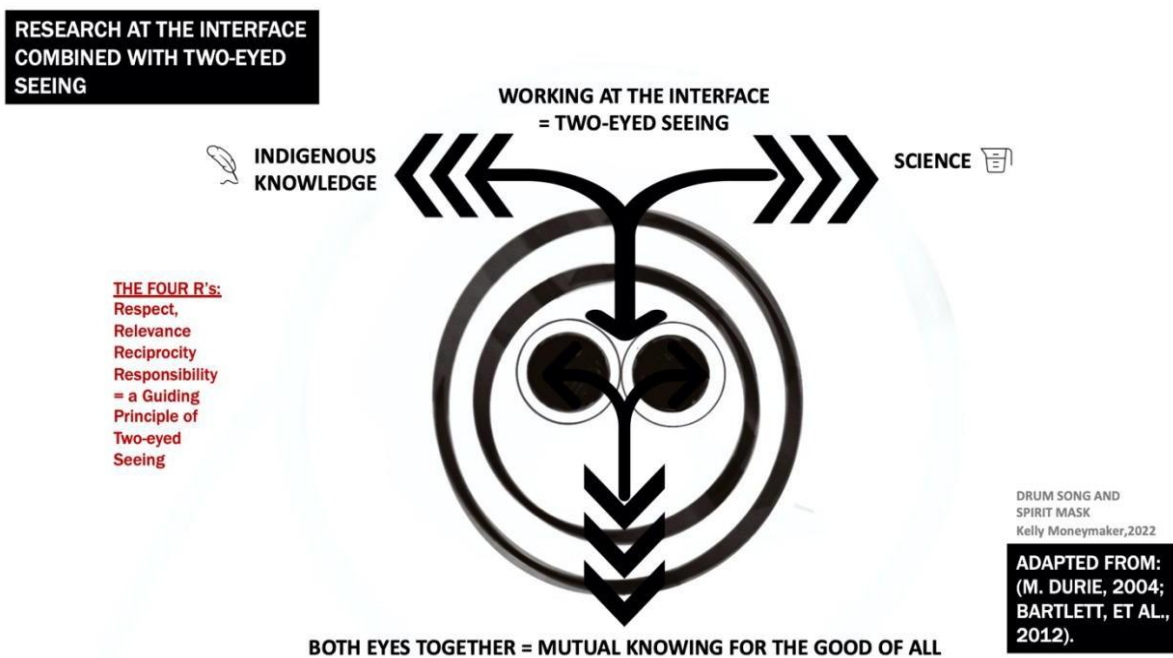


Figure 1: Adapted from Durie's "Research at the Interface" model.⁴²

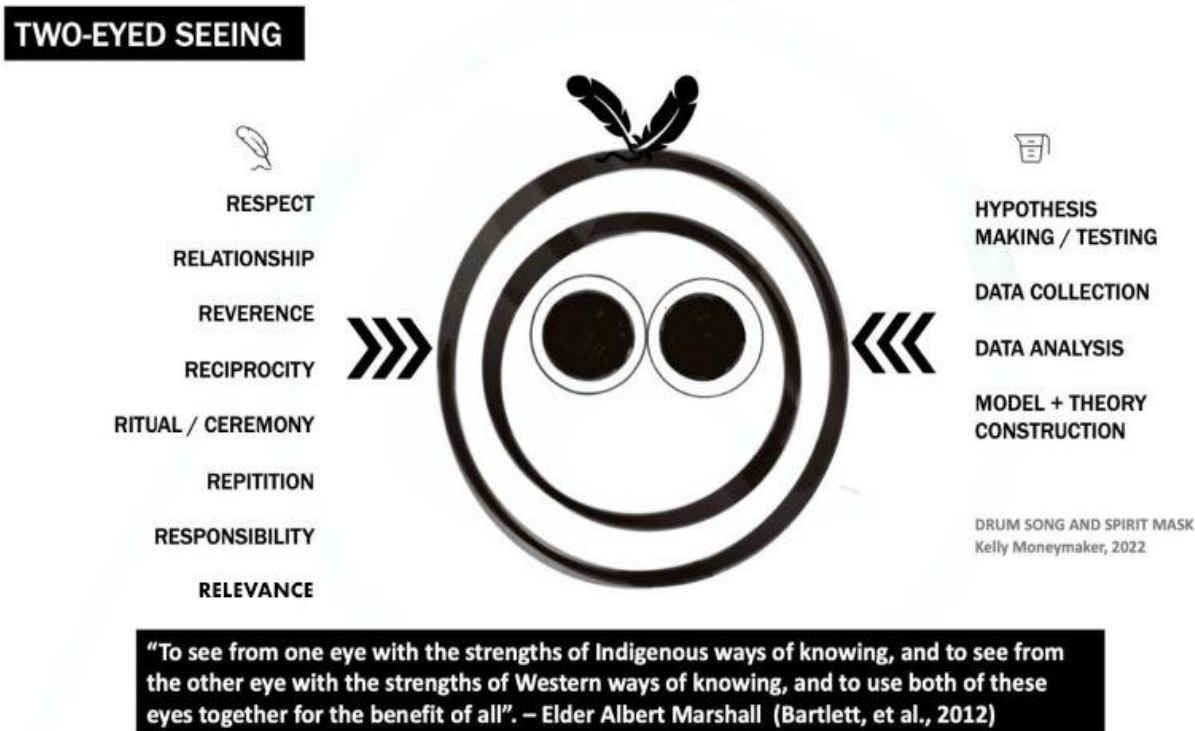


Figure 2: Adapted from Bartlett et al.'s "Two-eyed Seeing Map."⁴³

⁴² Durie, "Understanding Health and Illness", 1138-1143.

⁴³ Bartlett et al., *Two-Eyed Seeing and Other Lessons Learned*, 335.

To interface, Māori researchers combined scientific methods and Indigenous knowledge, alternatively known as "Two-eyed Seeing", coined by Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall. He says, "To see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing, and to see from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing, and to use both of these eyes together for the benefit of all".⁴⁴ Two-eyed Seeing uses the four Rs: respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility together as a guiding principle,⁴⁵ which are social values tethered to Inuit spirituality.⁴⁶

Toward a methodology of spirituality and ethical space

Indigenous spirituality explains that Native peoples are part of the ecology and connected to all living things.⁴⁷ "As Indigenous Peoples, it is not our nation's gross domestic product that we view as wealth but rather the strength of our languages, stories, and relationships to the land and animals".⁴⁸ Due to the socio-economic inequities created by colonization, Indigenous peoples are left vulnerable to climate-crisis-related challenges. This perpetuates villagers' distrust of Western interventions and reinforces the need for healing processes. He also offers that "knowledge is spirit, not a property or a commodity. Two-eyed Seeing implies people familiar with both knowledge systems can uniquely combine the two in various ways to meet a challenge or task at hand. In the context of environmental crises⁴⁹ alone, a combined nation of

⁴⁴ Bartlett et al., *Two-Eyed Seeing and Other Lessons Learned*, 335.

⁴⁵ Tristan Jeffery et al., "Two-Eyed Seeing: Current Approaches, and Discussion of Medical Applications," *British Columbia Medical Journal* 63, no. 8 (October 2021): 321-325.

⁴⁶ Jaypeetee Arnakak, "Incorporation of Inuit Qaujimanituqangit, or Inuit Traditional Knowledge into the Government of Nunavut," *The Journal of Aboriginal Economic Development* 3, no. 1 (2002): 33-39.

⁴⁷ Nunavut. Department of Education, "Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: Education Framework for Nunavut Curriculum," Nunavut: Department of Education, Curriculum and School Services Division, 2007.

<https://www.gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/files/Inuit%20Qaujimajatuqangit%20ENG.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Tabodondung, "Indigenous Perspectives," 130-147.

both seems essential. Two-eyed Seeing can easily be expanded to Multiple-eyed Seeing due to the variety of Indigenous cultures and place-based knowing".^{50 51}

I recognize a process of creative weaving with my communities when viewing my research this way. Weaving is a common cultural practice among Indigenous peoples, and it is related to the back-and-forth exchange of cultural (land and spirit-based) knowledge and Western knowledge. I have brought forth a Drum Song and Spirit Mask Indigenous research methodological framework that seeks to create a text and visually based ontological, epistemological, and methodological "weaving" for integrative "mapping" or what Ermine et al. refer to as "ethical space".⁵² I believe that Indigenous research methodologies (my own included) seek to create ethical space at the intersection of shared knowledges. In articulating my Indigenous research methodology, my literature review continues a dialogue with writers whose work intersects with my own.

⁴⁹ Ranjan Datta, "Traditional Storytelling: An Effective Indigenous Research Methodology and its implications for Environmental Research", *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 14, no. 1 (2017): 35-44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180117741351>.

⁵⁰ Glen S. Aikenhead et al., *Bridging Cultures: Scientific and Indigenous Ways of Knowing Nature* (Toronto, Ont: Pearson Canada, 2011).

⁵¹ Alan Watson, Lilian Alessa, and Brian Glaspell, "The Relationship between Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Evolving Cultures, and Wilderness Protection in the Circumpolar North," Arctic Portal Library (The Resilience Alliance, January 1, 1970), <http://library.arcticportal.org/id/eprint/1537>.

⁵² Willie Ermine, Raven Sinclair, and Bonnie Jeffery, *The Ethics of Research Involving Indigenous Peoples: Report of the Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre to the Interagency Advisory Panel on Research Ethics (PRE)*. (Saskatoon, SK: Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre, 2004).

Indigenous Methodologies

Digital storytelling "can influence Indigenous healthiness and resilience by offering a means of owning and being able to tell one's own story".⁵³ Rebeka Tabobondung asserts, "It is my hope that autonomous media creation will not reproduce a carbon copy of dominant media values but will instead look inwards to create media that reflects our cultural values and aesthetics as well as the diversity of our voices"⁵⁴. An example of such making has been proven possible through the Inuktitut filming of *Atanarjuat: The Fast Runner* where an Inuit style of cooperative co-production implemented colloquial humor, fearlessness, and teamwork.⁵⁵ Similarly, the community and crew synergy actioned autonomy through co-creative processes throughout my research project.

Peltier observes that within Indigenous research paradigms, others have put forward ideas and ethics for a new research agenda based on Indigenous Methodologies, worldviews, and practices of knowing and being.⁵⁶ She adapted Jacklin and Kinoshameg's Wikwemikong Community Needs Assessment Research CBPAR⁵⁷ model (in red) along with Two-eyed Seeing's four Rs (in blue): Relevance, Reciprocity, Respect, and Responsibility, to create a kinetic model circling around the production of knowledge:

⁵³ Aline Gubrium, "Digital Storytelling: An Emergent Method for Health Promotion Research and Practice," *Health Promotion Practice* 10, no. 2 (April 10, 2009): 187; Archibald, *Indigenous Storywork*.

⁵⁴ Tabobondung, "Indigenous Perspectives," 130-147

⁵⁵ Tabobondung, "Indigenous Perspectives," 130-147.

⁵⁶ Peltier, "An Application of Two-Eyed Seeing."

⁵⁷ Kristin Jacklin et al., "Developing a Participatory Aboriginal Health Research Project: 'Only If It's Going to Mean Something,'" *Journal of Empirical Research on Human Research Ethics* 3, no. 2 (June 3, 2008): 53-67.

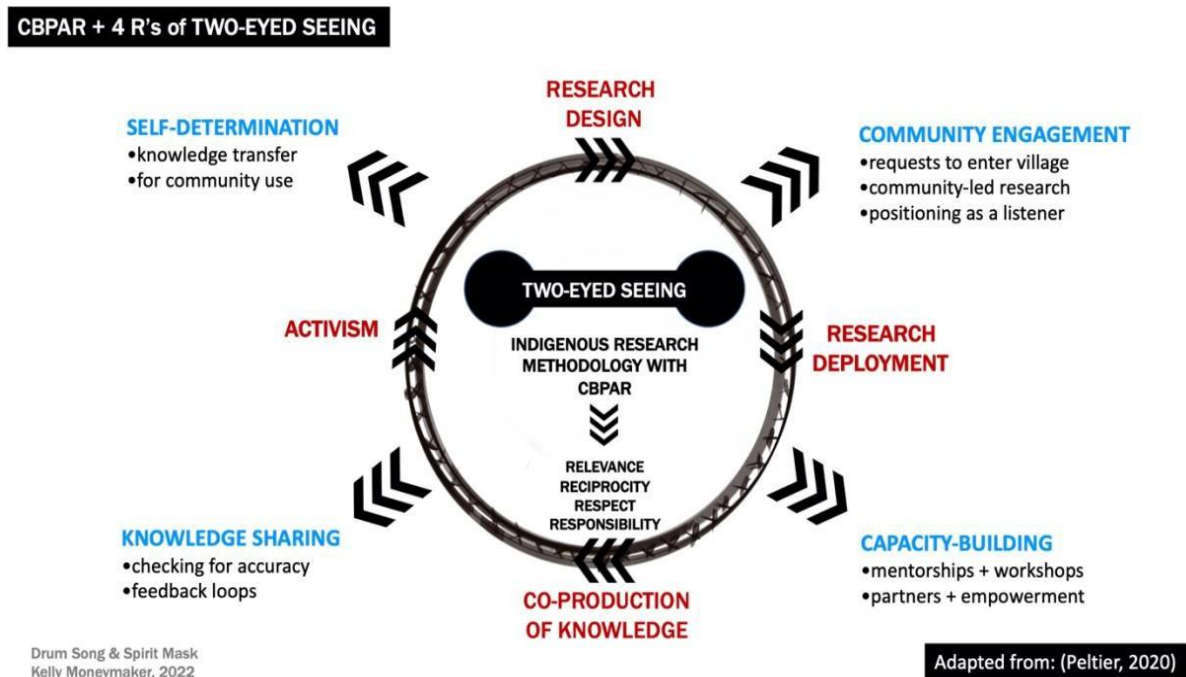


Figure 3: Adapted from Peltier's "CBPAR with Two-eyed Seeing's 4 Rs" Model.⁵⁸

The model involves sharing as empowerment and self-determination to embody Kovach's concept of "researcher in relation" and ground her work as an Indigenous researcher.⁵⁹ This body of work conducted by those who have come before, along with cultural wisdom shared with me by my biological mother and adoptive Inupiat grandmother, have laid the backbone for my research paradigm and imparted upon me the responsibilities of a researcher in relation with their communities and the sharing of Indigenous Knowledges.⁶⁰ Like many other writers, my own research is influenced by *whakapapa* that reaches through and beyond familial genealogy.

⁵⁸ Peltier, "An Application of Two-Eyed Seeing."

⁵⁹ Margaret Kovach, "Conversation Method in Indigenous Research," *First Peoples Child & Family Review: An interdisciplinary journal honouring the voices, Perspectives, and knowledges of first peoples* 5, no. 1 (2010): 40-48.

⁶⁰ Kovach, "Conversation Method in Indigenous Research," 40-48; Kovach, "Doing Indigenous Methodologies--a Letter to a Research Class," in *Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin et al. (Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications, 2017): 383-406; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*; Wilson, *Research is Ceremony*.

In reference to Tuhiwai Smith's groundbreaking work, for instance, Tuck explains that "*Decolonizing Methodologies* has profoundly influenced my generation of critical researchers. It has given us an anti-colonial lexicon of research, and an ethics of making space and showing face".⁶¹ Smith herself shares, "The book provokes revolutionary thinking about roles that knowledge, knowledge production, knowledge hierarchies and knowledge institutions play in decolonization and social transformation".⁶² The works of both women felt like a personal call-to-action. Tuhiwai Smith's research agenda embodies the movement of ocean tides and four compass directions to navigate terrains of transformation through psychological-socio-economical processes of decolonization by conceptualizing survival, healing, spiritual, recovery, development, and self-determination as a means of social justice.⁶³ I have laid the four tides and four directions agenda as a foundation for building my Drum Song and Spirit Mask methodology map.

⁶¹ Eve Tuck, "Commentary: Decolonizing Methodologies 15 Years Later," *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples* 9, no. 4 (September 1, 2013): 365-372, <https://doi.org/10.1177/117718011300900407>.

⁶² Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, xii.

⁶³ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 199-121.

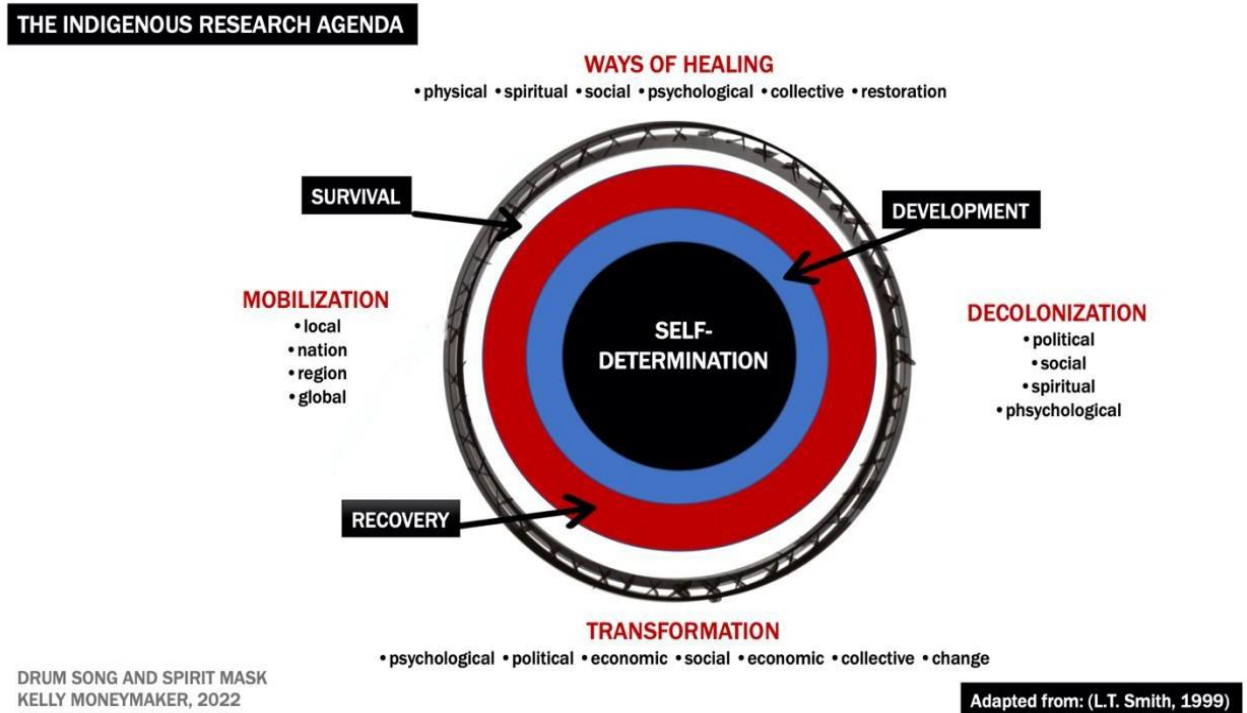


Figure 4. Adapted from L. T. Smith's *The Indigenous Research Agenda*.⁶⁴

Verena Thomas et al. utilized a visual arts and CBPAR-based approach to Indigenous research to establish relational accountability and ethical research practices. "Arts-based research methods are closely linked to cultural approaches to transformation and social change" and visual maps may be especially relevant for lands containing Indigenous peoples who speak different languages.⁶⁵ On the issues of language, Nelson Mandela gifted, "If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart."⁶⁶ This idea may likewise be extended to visual language. "Words are abstract and rather difficult for the brain to retain, whereas visuals are concrete and, as such, more easily

⁶⁴ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 122.

⁶⁵ Verena Thomas et al., "Relational accountability in indigenizing visual research for participatory communication," *SAGE Open* 6, no. 1, (2016): 1-4.

⁶⁶ Sarah Coleman, Donnie MacNicol, and Wendy Briner, *Project Leadership* (Farnham, Surrey: Gower, 2015): 215.

remembered".⁶⁷ Alaska is home to at least twenty Native languages⁶⁸ belonging to four distinct language families,⁶⁹ so visual language is an important tool for knowledge sharing.

With all these ideas in mind, and in honor of the "creative enquiry" encountered through my literature review, I have crafted "Drum Song and Spirit Mask" as a visual representation of the research methodology that I employed in my creative practice. The research design and methods responding to the opportunities and responsibilities inherent in Indigenous research and community-based filmmaking practice, are outlined in the sections that follow.

Research Position and Design

The below theoretical frameworks explain the approach, execution, and analysis of my research.

Philosophy and Theory: A pragmatic philosophy was applied using qualitative data collection methods: interviews, questionnaires, observations, and decolonial theory.⁷⁰ Any authentic decolonial research approach embodies an inherent feminist lens and must acknowledge disenfranchised peoples and gender discrimination since patriarchy is a driving force behind imperialism, which is behind colonialism.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Haig Kouyoumdjian, "Learning through Visuals," *Psychology Today*, posted July 12, 2012, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/get-psyched/201207/learning-through-visuals>.

⁶⁸ "AK native language preservation & advisory council," Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development; Division and Community Regional Affairs. N.d., August 17, 2022, <https://www.commerce.alaska.gov/web/dkra/AKNativeLanguagePreservationAdvisoryCouncil.aspx>

⁶⁹ Holton, "Alaska Native Language Relationships".

⁷⁰ Hilary Collins, *Creative Research: The Theory and Practice of Research for the Creative Industries* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2019).

⁷¹ Eve Tuck et al., "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1-40.

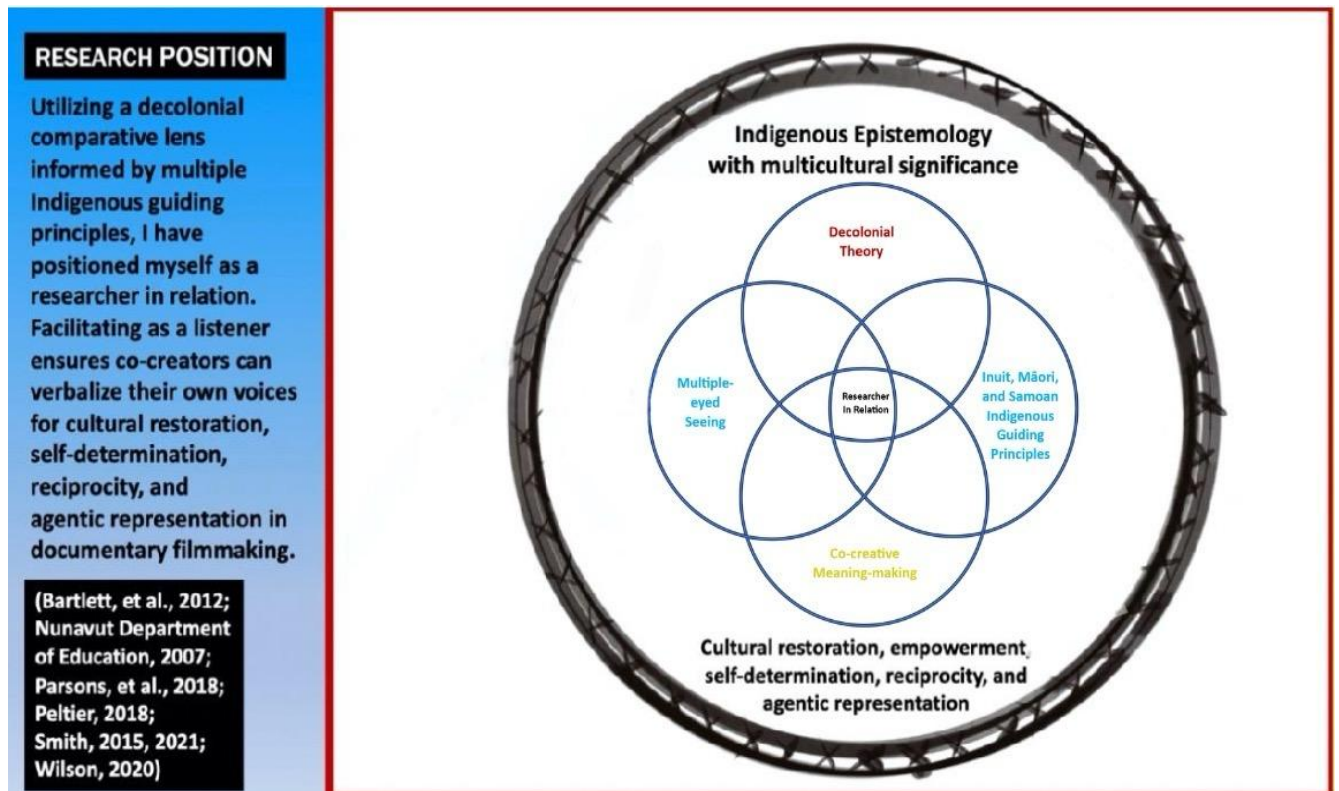


Figure 5: Research Position ⁷²

Our cultural weaving carries our sustenance, history, and a space to share intergenerational knowledge and stories. "Indigenous researchers are knowledge seekers who work to progress Indigenous ways of being, knowing and doing in a modern and constantly evolving context".⁷³ Utilizing experiences as a Native American along with Wilson's Relational Ways of Making by "weaving the past with the present and future as part of a living culture"⁷⁴ provides a personal ontological framework which has informed the research design.

⁷² David Welchman Gegeo, and Karen Ann Watson-Gegeo. "How We Know': Kwara'ae Rural Villagers Doing Indigenous Epistemology." *The Contemporary Pacific* 13, no.1 (2001): 55-88. <https://doi.org/10.1353/cp.2001.0004>.

⁷³ Wilson, *Research is Ceremony* (2020).

⁷⁴ Wilson, *Research is Ceremony* (2008).



Figure 6: Research Design

Indigenous Axiology: "Working in co-creation informs allies of current Indigenous thinking by creating spaces to connect and share so that they may offer practical support. This co-creation informs and invites new conversations and prevents the misappropriation of Indigenous Knowledge".⁷⁵ This axiology (or philosophy of what is considered valuable) was adapted to include remote filmmaking strategies (due to COVID protocols), which place the storytelling in the hands of the people by implementing Indigenous localhost and crew to ensure Indigenous agency.

⁷⁵ Jordan P. Lewis, "Successful Aging through the Eyes of Alaska Native Elders: What it Means to be an Elder in Bristol Bay, AK," *The Gerontologist* 51, no. 4 (August 28, 2011): 540-49.

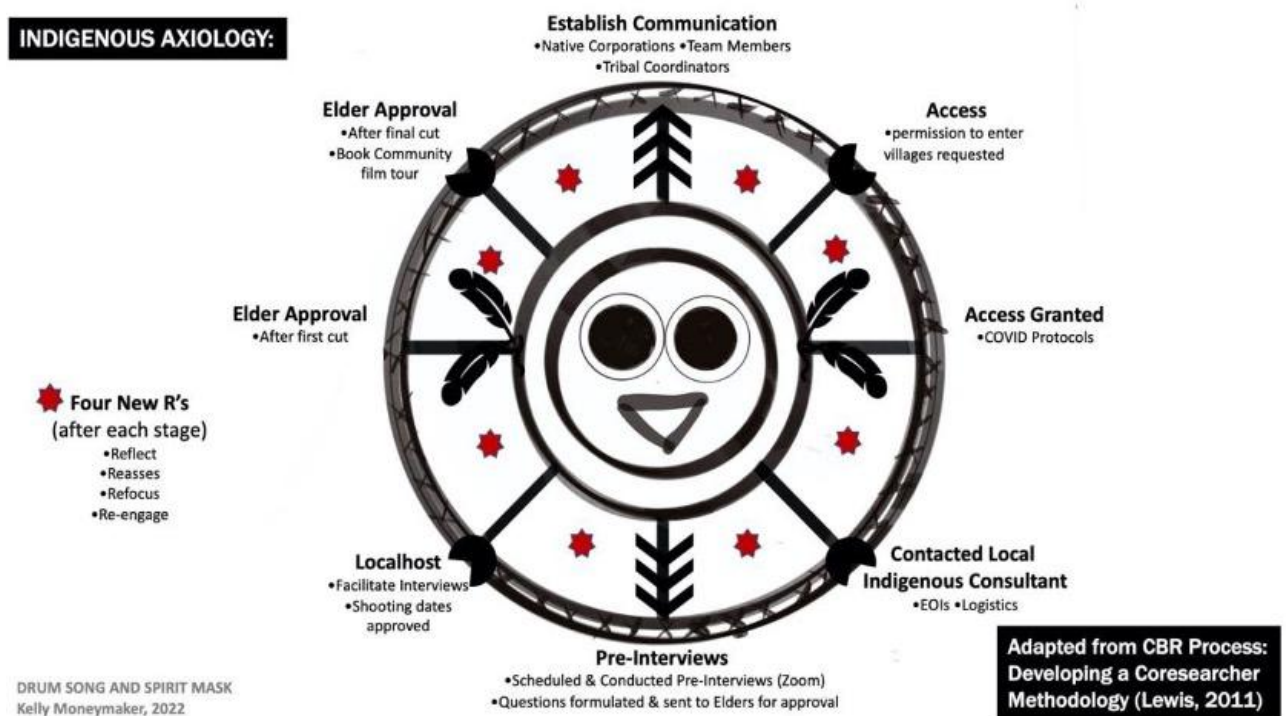


Figure 7: Drum Song and Spirit Mask Indigenous Axiology.

Visual Art and Project Mapping

My research is based on storytelling as it arises from the community. An Indigenous "Drum Song and Spirit Mask" model visually represents an alternative methodological research framework to break down key definitions and meanings. I have adapted and combined the following as an amalgamated tool for documentary filmmaking: (1) Tuhiwai Smith's Four Tides and Four Directions⁷⁶; (2) Indigenous spiritual guiding principles of Inuit⁷⁷, Maori⁷⁸, and

⁷⁶ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999), 122.

⁷⁷ Nunavut Department of Education, "Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit."

⁷⁸ Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. "Kaupapa Māori Research- Some Kaupapa Māori Principles," in *Kaupapa Rangahau: a Reader: a Collection of Readings from the Kaupapa Māori Research Workshop Series*, ed. Leonie Pihama et al. (Waikato, NZ: Te Kotahi Research Institute, 2015), 46-52.

Samoan⁷⁹ peoples for Multiple-eyed Seeing⁸⁰ as a comparative lens and Western data collection systems⁸¹; (3) An adaptation of Jordan P. Lewis's, Indigenous axiology map⁸²; (4) CB-PAR; and (5) autoethnography⁸³ and narrative reflection.⁸⁴

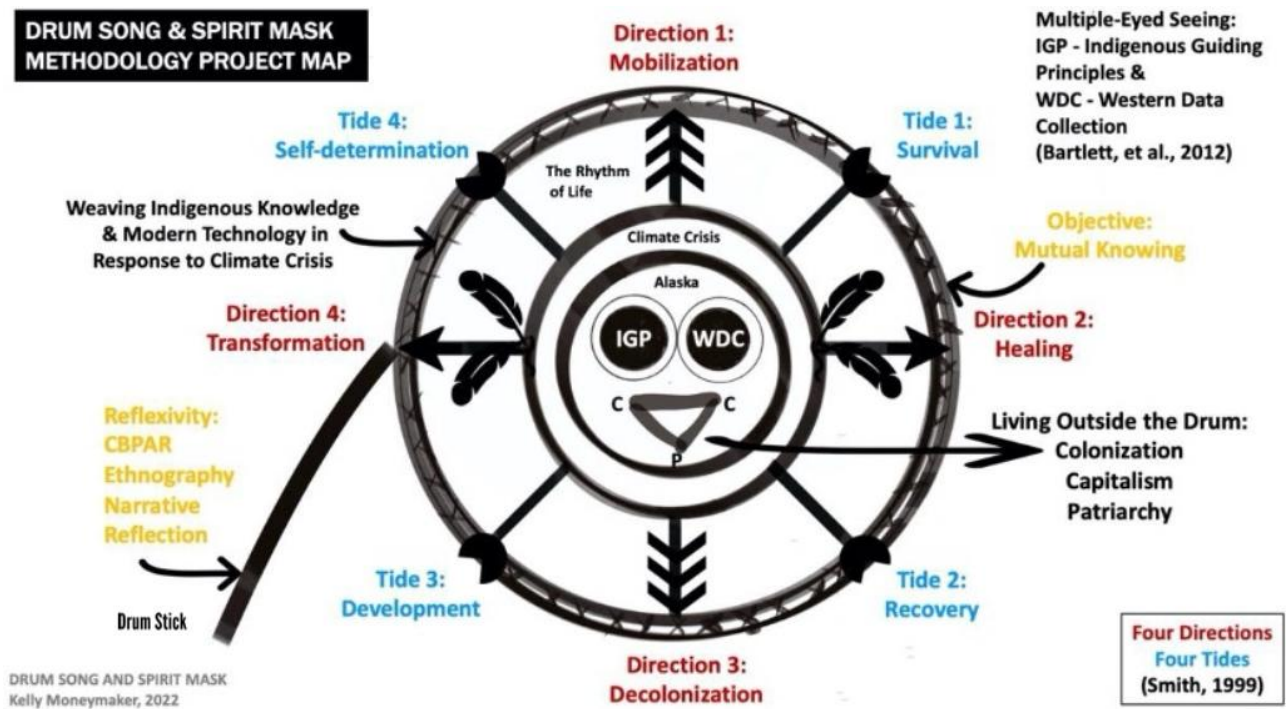


Figure 8: Drum Song and Spirit Mask Methodology Map.

Objectives

My research objectives were to make a film using an alternative approach by practicing autoethnography⁸⁵ and "the key principles of community-based participatory action research:

⁷⁹ Meg Parsons et al., "Assessing Adaptive Capacity and Adaptation: Insights from Samoan Tourism Operators," *Climate and Development* 10, no. 7 (October 3, 2018): 644-63.

⁸⁰ Elhaik, "What Is Contemporary Anthropology?"

⁸¹ Collins, *Creative Research*; Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2018).

⁸² Lewis, "Successful Aging through the Eyes of Alaska Native Elders," 540-549.

⁸³ Andrew C. Sparkes, "Autoethnography and Narratives of Self: Reflections on Criteria in Action," *Sociology of Sport Journal* 17, no. 1 (2000): pp. 21-43, <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.17.1.21>.

⁸⁴ McIvor, "I Am My Subject."

⁸⁵ McIvor, "I Am My Subject."

(1) A commitment to the participation of ordinary people as co-researchers involved in every aspect of the research, (2) Respect for the knowledge of all participants, (3) Mutual learning among participants, and (4) Attention to the needs of marginalized people and others like them".⁸⁶

Willox et al. explain that "digital storytelling has the potential to become a narrative method that is a more participatory and democratic form of social research, premised on sharing and illuminating the lived experiences of individuals through a fluid, transferable, and digital format".⁸⁷ In this quest for "mutual knowing" Sium, Desai, & Ritskes (2012)⁸⁸ view that "Decolonization is not always about the co-existence of knowledges, or knowledge synthesis, which inevitably centers colonial logic. Co-existence at what cost and for whose benefit?".⁸⁹ My intent is to decolonize research deployment and storytelling, allowing research to be shareable with communities, whether live or digital, which grounds such deployment. I've used Multiple-eyed Seeing as a lens to empower Indigenous peoples by sharing cultural knowledge systems and bridging knowledge to academe as a base for mutual understanding and forward momentum (healing, restoration, reciprocity, respect, and opportunities) for Indigenous peoples.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Elena Wilson, "Community-Based Participatory Action Research," *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*, (2018): 1-15; Baum et al., "Participatory Action Research."

⁸⁷ Ashley Cunsolo Willox et al., "Storytelling in a Digital Age: Digital Storytelling as an Emerging Narrative Method for Preserving and Promoting Indigenous Oral Wisdom," *Qualitative Research* 13, no. 2 (2012): 127-47.

⁸⁸ Aman Sium, Chandni Desai, and Eric Ritskes, "Towards the 'tangible unknown': Decolonization and the Indigenous future." *Decolonization: indigeneity, education & society* 1, no. 1 (2012): I-XIII.

⁸⁹ Keane, "Decolonising Methodology".

⁹⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Commitment*. Hadley, MA: Routledge, 2015.

Two-eyed Seeing expanded into Multiple-eyed Seeing

To create a space to support mutual knowing between Western and Indigenous worldviews, I have expanded upon "Two-eyed Seeing" to "Multiple-eyed Seeing" by including other Indigenous knowledge systems which embody similar values to establish patterns and alignments with my emerging model for engagement with Native communities. These knowledge systems include (1) Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ), (2) Kaupapa Māori Theory, and (3) Fa'a Samoa:

1. Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit (IQ) includes eight cooperative guiding principles:

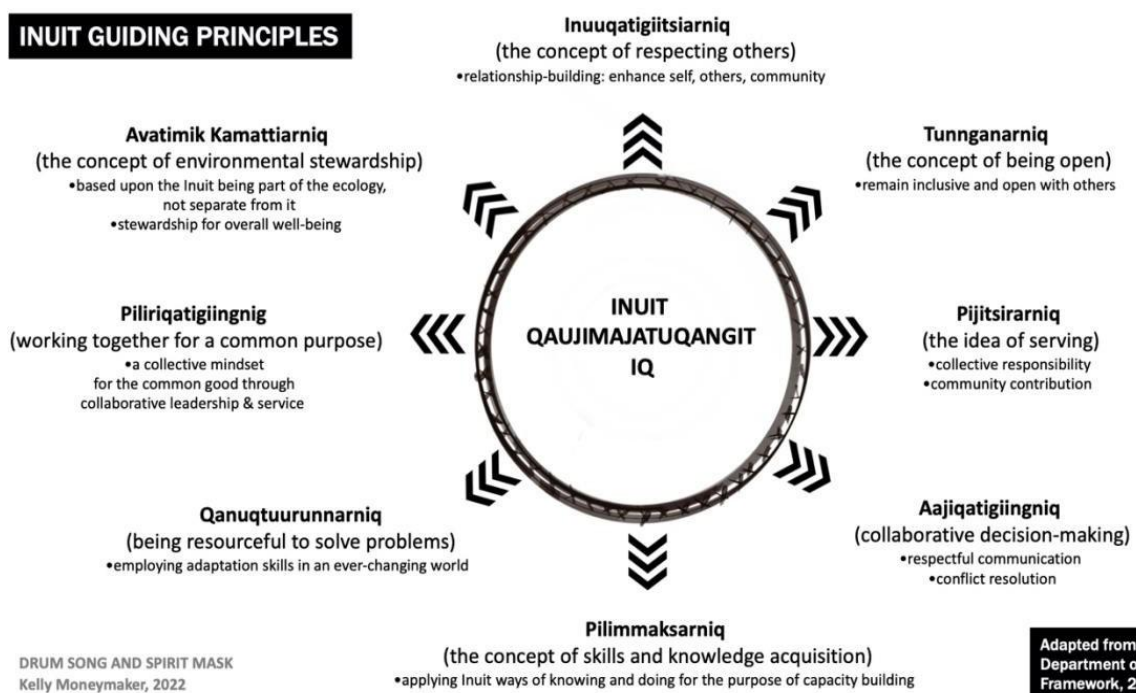
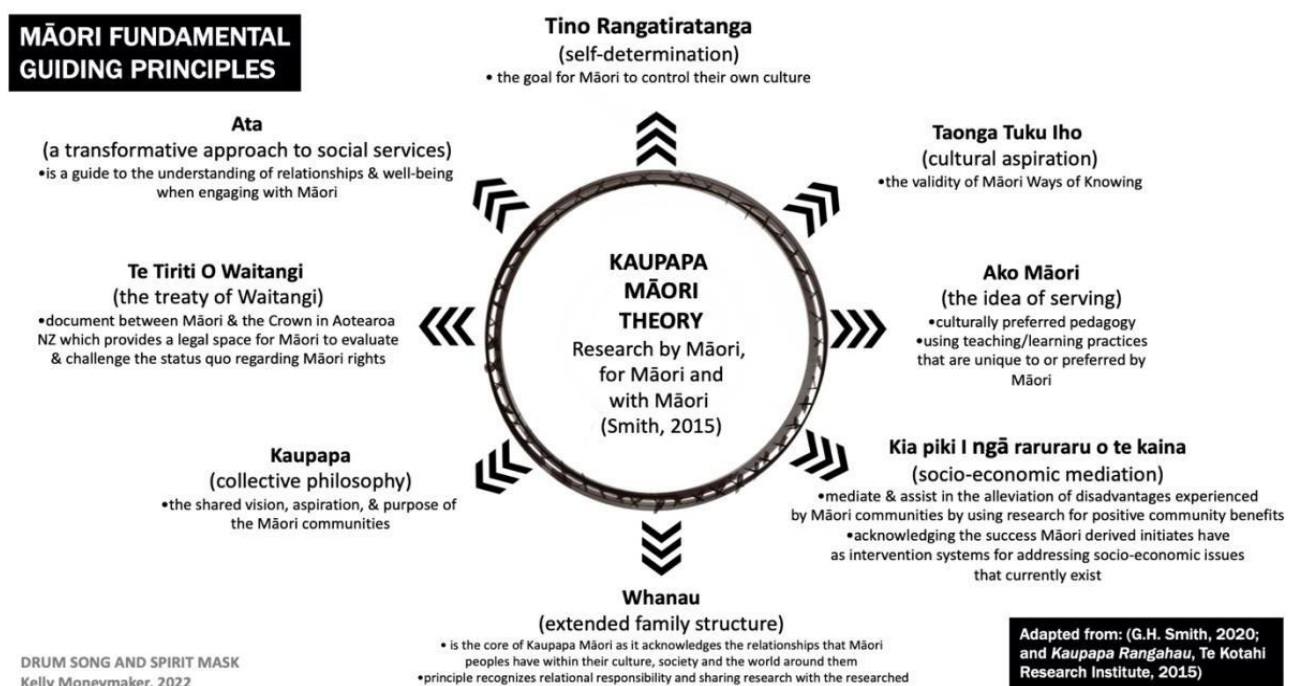


Figure 9: Inuit Guiding Principles.⁹¹

⁹¹ Nunavut Department of Education, "Inuit Qaujimagatuqangit."

2. Kaupapa Māori Theory

Kaupapa Māori is "an approach to research by Māori, for Māori and with Māori".⁹² The



fundamental principles include:

Figure 10: Adapted from Smith's Kaupapa Māori Theory.⁹³

3. Fa'a Samoa

Another means of expanding to "Multiple-Eyed Seeing" includes Fa'a Samoa, guiding principles for the Samoan Way of Life:

⁹² Smith, "Kaupapa Māori Research."

⁹³ Smith, "Kaupapa Māori Research."

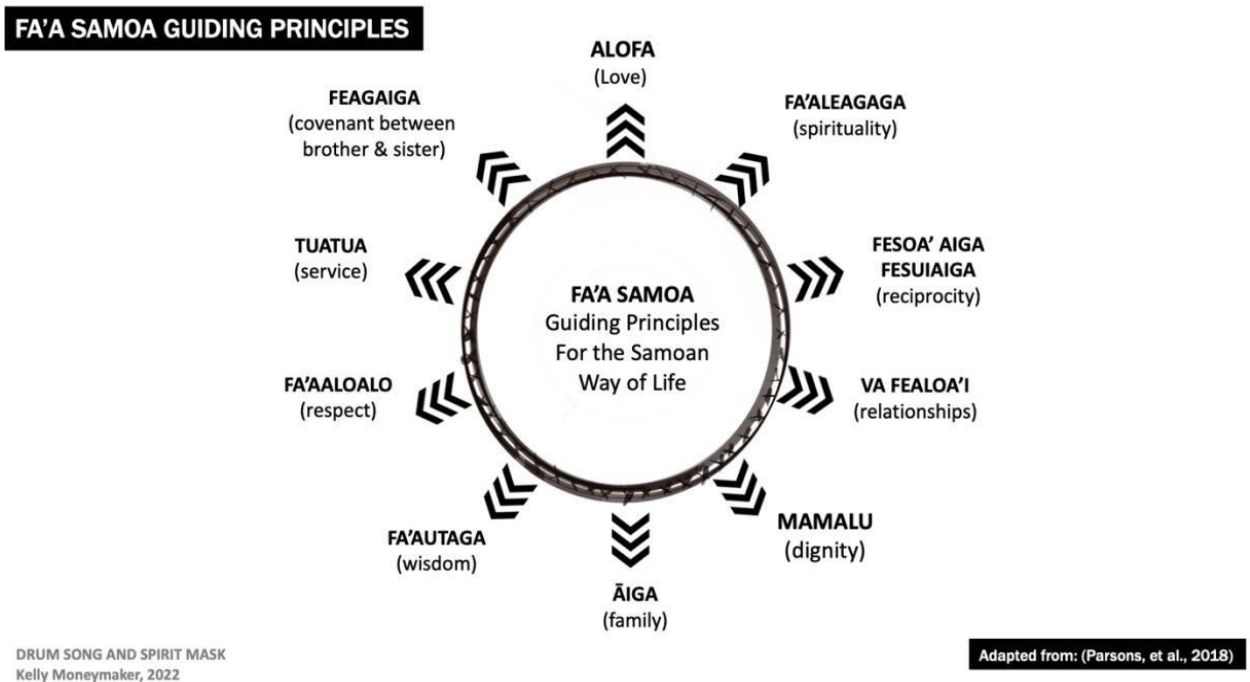


Figure 11: Adapted from Parsons et al. Fa'a Samoa Guiding Principles.⁹⁴

Inupiat, Samoan, and Māori cultures share similar values, recognize the importance of Indigenous Knowledge, and one's relationship with culture, society, and the world around us. Implementing shared guiding principles and knowledge systems from multiple Indigenous cultures allows a wider comparative lens for mutual understanding. Within that space lies opportunity for healing forward.

⁹⁴ Parsons, Meg, Cilla Brown, Johanna Nalau, and Karen Fisher. "Assessing Adaptive Capacity and Adaptation: Insights from Samoan Tourism Operators." *Climate and Development* 10, no. 7 (October 3, 2018): 644-63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17565529.2017.1410082>.

Boundary spanning

"A particular area of interest within creating mutual knowing is boundary spanning"⁹⁵ where a scientist or researcher works with local communities to create an open dialogue. Indigenous academics are often tokenized to bargain on behalf of dominating bodies or corporations with business interests on Indigenous lands. Now, these Native researchers are working alongside their communities to ensure ethical dealings by creating a space for mutual understanding. One of our hosts shared that she was previously on an upward career path until she realized she was being tokenized. She is currently an interdisciplinary PhD candidate within the Natural Resources and Environment Degree Program at University of Alaska Fairbanks, on the Co-production of Knowledge with Alaskan Native Communities and Boundary Spanners on Climate Change Research.⁹⁶ Her services as a Boundary Spanner during our Fairbanks production phase were invaluable. We would not have been able to establish or weave communications between Native Knowledge-holders, IARC scientists, and the Army Corps of Engineers without her help.

Methods

"Methods are not passive strategies. They produce, reveal, and enable the display of different kinds of identities".⁹⁷ When working with Indigenous communities, research methods should first and foremost be about "establishing, maintaining, and nurturing reciprocal and

⁹⁵ Nathan P. Kettle et al., "The Role of Remote Engagement in Supporting Boundary Chain Networks across Alaska," *Climate Risk Management* 9 (July 2, 2015): 6-19.

⁹⁶ "Amber Keith-Smith," International Arctic Research Center, University of Alaska, accessed April 13, 2022. https://uaf-iarc.org/?directory_entry=margaret-rudolf.

⁹⁷ Michelle P. Fine et al., "Writing the 'Wrongs' of Fieldwork: Confronting Our Own Research/ Writing Dilemmas in Urban Ethnographies," *Qualitative Inquiry* 2, no. 3 (September 1, 1996): 251-74.

respectful relationships, not just among people as individuals, but also with people as individuals, as collectives, and as members of communities".⁹⁸

In the making of the documentary film, *Drum Song: The Rhythm of Life*, I worked with my crew and participant communities through the methods that aligned with the research design and our ethics of intention. Enroute to the film's co-creative production, which is central to the discussion that follows, the priority was to respectfully engage with communities across Alaska, which involved following a specific hierarchy of contacting state and regional Native organizations. I was then able to reach village council tribal coordinators to ask for permission to enter and gain access to villages for filming. I sent an email introducing myself, explaining the project and my intentions to the tribal coordinators, who reached out to local Elders on my behalf. Due to the COVID pandemic, many villages refused access. Shishmaref, on the west coast of Alaska, was the first village to grant my team entry.

An Indigenous Axiology guided the entire research process. "Working in co-creation informs allies of current Indigenous thinking by creating spaces to connect and share so that they may offer practical support. This co-creation informs and invites new conversations and prevents the misappropriation of Indigenous Knowledge".⁹⁹ This axiology was adapted to include remote filmmaking strategies due to COVID protocols. The hiring of local Indigenous youth interviewers and film crew members not only supported authentic storytelling, but it also ensured the continuation of production despite travel restrictions during the pandemic.

⁹⁸ Cunsolo Willox et al, "Storytelling in a Digital Age," 127-47; Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 97.

⁹⁹ Lewis, "Successful Aging through the Eyes of Alaska Native Elders," 540-549.

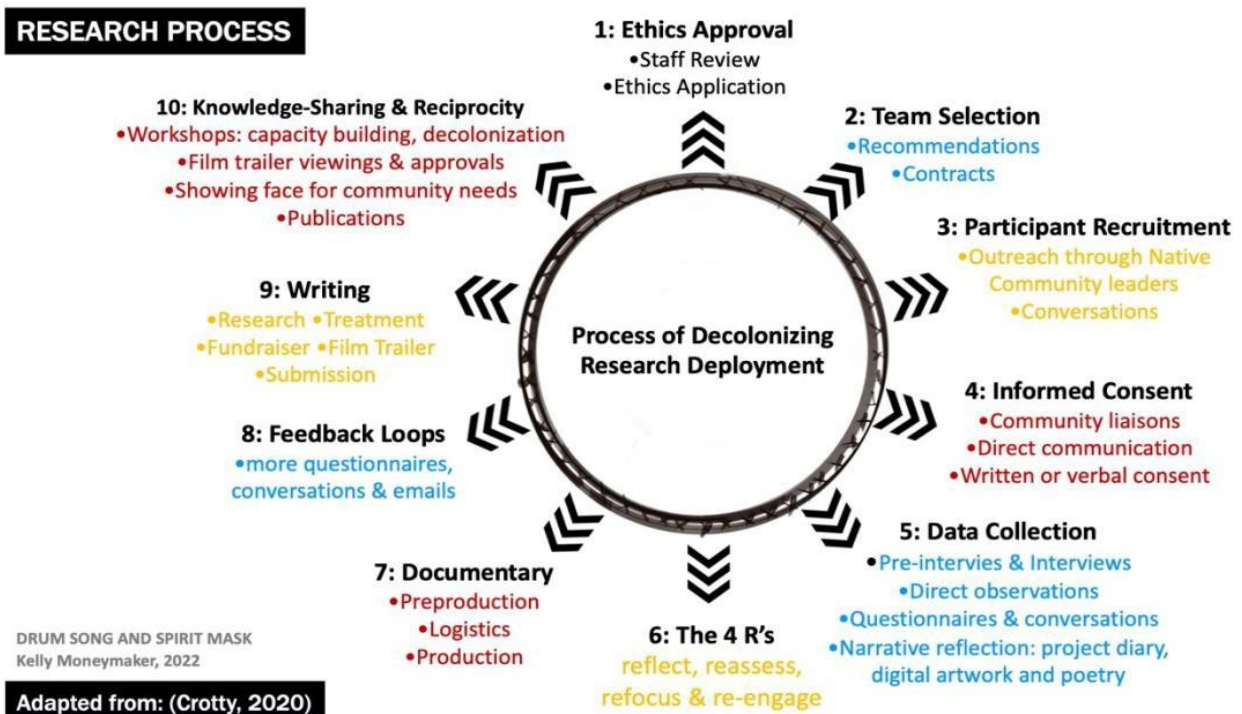


Figure 12: The Research Process¹⁰⁰

Discussion of Creative Work

Drum Song: The Rhythm of Life documentary utilizes digital storytelling to explore the preservation of Indigenous Alaskan peoples' oral histories, traditions, and Indigenous Knowledge as they are being forced to move away from their ancestral lands or adapt due to the impacts of the climate crisis. It tells a widely relevant, socio-political story from an Indigenous perspective. The global impact of the story feeds into the current and worldwide surge of politically conscious Indigenous peoples demanding human rights, food sovereignty, and self-governance.¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ Michael Crotty, *"The Foundations of Social Research: Meaning and Perspective in the Research process."* London, UK: 2020.

¹⁰¹ Kelly Moneymaker, *Cryosphere Pavilion - Indigenous Knowledge and Cryosphere Science: Arctic and Mountain Indigenous Peoples, 'Indigenous Climate Adaptation and Mitigation: Responses from Alaska and Tokelau,'* 11. November 2021, Facebook video, 77 min. <https://www.facebook.com/COP26CryospherePavilion/videos/571253657500540/>.

The overall story arc is focused on the combined use of Indigenous Knowledge and modern technology in response to climate crisis-related issues, which directly impact Indigenous peoples who are already at risk due to the inequities created by the triangle of colonization, patriarchy, and capitalism. Yet, "the Indigenous peoples of Alaska survive, adapt, and thrive as they have done since time immemorial".¹⁰²

For this exegesis, I am submitting a trailer, treatment one-sheet, and slide deck. The intention is to first edit a short documentary to distribute on the film festival circuit and then pitch to streaming networks and aggregates as a series pilot. After recouping expenses, proceeds will be used to facilitate capacity-building scholarship programs for Indigenous Alaskan youths, mental health programs, and fund Native businesses as a form of reciprocity.

Finding a local team

The documentary presented challenges of filming under extreme conditions in remote Alaskan locations with me producing and directing remotely via phone. The crew would need to be experienced, self-motivated, resilient, and knowledgeable of the terrain, able to withstand "roughing it".

Scanning credits of Northern reality television shows led me to Emmy Award-Nominated Director of Photography Tom Trainor, from Discovery Network's "Deadliest Catch". Tom was raised in Unalakleet, on Alaska's west coast, so he knew the territory well. I also found Shishmaref Production Coordinator Dennis Davis, who has worked with the BBC, Discovery,

¹⁰² Kelly Money maker, dir., *Drum Song: The Rhythm of Life (Trailer for the Upcoming Documentary)*, 24 May 2022, YouTube video, 2:22 min. <https://youtu.be/v3V9eAsDNlg>.

the Smithsonian Institute, and the Alaska Federation of Natives (AFN). Gabriel Derrick came to us from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks as a Cinematographer, and Editor. Every member of the team is either Indigenous Alaskan or has been raised by such, to uphold the researcher in relation valuation and follow natural village rhythms.

Our Production Coordinator contacted essential co-creators, such as Elders, community leaders, teachers, hunters, artists, storytellers, waste management workers, and others. Many villagers were reticent due to engagement fatigue, ill treatment by previous researchers, or being busy harvesting food for their families. Large TV networks and production companies have been in and out of Alaskan villages to report or research climate change-related issues. These production companies often do not pay villagers for their time.¹⁰³ Once they've accomplished their agenda, they depart and spend money at different, larger locations. News travels back to the villages quickly by word of mouth, leaving a negative impact.

A crucial Indigenous guiding principle is reciprocity, so I offered fees to each co-creator for their time. I contacted my production coordinator to help set a payment fee for community participants. Paying co-creators for knowledge sharing does increase the budget but doing so is ethical filmmaking. Once the interviewees were confirmed I conducted pre-interviews, then comprised research questions and sent them to the village council Elders for their input and approval. Approval was given after modifications were made. We applied the same processes for our World Eskimo Indian Olympics (WEIO) shoot in Fairbanks and additional filming in Nome, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Cordova.

Traditional production release forms usually grant a blanket of permission and ownership of all film and audio recorded. I worded the release forms with Western legal jargon to protect my team. Yet, I obtained approvals and feedback at every stage of production, such as the

¹⁰³ Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (2017).

release of the film trailer and fundraising video.¹⁰⁴ I continued to do so through project completion. I used crowd-funding to afford visiting villages to gain collective feedback. The film was not released to film festivals until the co-creators had an opportunity to submit any necessary changes to the rough cut and approved the final cut. Clifford Weyiouanna is one of our main co-creators in Shishmaref, a ninety-year-old Elder and former reindeer herder. After viewing the film trailer, he told our Production Coordinator, "She really gets us". Positioning as a listener is a sign of respect, and by creating space through listening, rich history is bestowed.

The Grapevine: Preparing for interviews and working with localhost

The COVID-19 pandemic forced a strategic change for conducting research since project was based in Alaska, and New Zealand non-residents (me at the time) were not allowed to travel outside Aotearoa. The obstacle became an opportunity to indigenize the documentary filmmaking process by hiring localhost and crew to conduct the interviews. We asked the interviewees to recommend a local youth leader they'd prefer to work with.

Connectivity between New Zealand and Alaska is intermittent, so it was essential to understand potential challenges as a producer-director. Thus, a "grapevine" prototype was devised to provide a practice exercise for remote filmmaking.¹⁰⁵ It was modeled after a childhood game based on sharing a story amongst a chain of friends and how that story may drastically change as it is repeated. How might the interview outcome differ due to localhost colloquialisms, phrasing, tone, inflection, and body language?

¹⁰⁴ See Appendix 1a: *Drum Song: The Rhythm of Life* trailer

¹⁰⁵ See Appendix 4b: Narrative Reflection: Grapevine Prototyping

Would the interviewees be more comfortable being questioned by someone from their community?

The data provided by the Grapevine prototype led me to acknowledge that my purpose and intention as a Native American filmmaker working within Indigenous communities is to support without causing any harm. I am an insider as an Alaskan, but an outsider because I do not reside in a remote village. I could not and cannot speak for village communities, so hiring localhost and crew provided a positive solution for both remote filmmaking strategies and indigenizing documentary filmmaking.

Feedback from localhost

A stick is held for communication purposes in both sharing circles and drum circles.¹⁰⁶ At first, remote filmmaking strategies were exercised to accommodate filming in Alaska while studying in Aotearoa during the initial COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns. Later, once I was able to return home and interview villagers in person, the stick provided a personal reminder to make space for reflexivity. I would meditate after each filming day and while in repose, I found a new set of engagement Four Rs (Reflect, Reassess, Refocus, and Re-engage) to compliment the Indigenous principle Four Rs in Figure 1 (Respect, Relevance, Reciprocity, and Responsibility). If I applied a critical lens to my own research, I could improve the collaborative process from one interview to the next. The biggest question was: Am I adhering to the research question of using an Indigenous methodology to create a space for mutual knowing with each stage of production? Am I accurately listening? I engaged in direct conversations with my co-creators to gain perspective.

There is an issue of language, so some participants are reticent to respond to questionnaires and therefore I received few responses. One also cannot send emails and expect quick replies from Indigenous communities. During summer in Alaska, it is difficult to

¹⁰⁶ Donna E. Hurdle, "The Health of Alaska Native Women," *Journal of Poverty* 2, no. 4 (1998): 47-61.

communicate while the halibut, salmon and trout are running, and berries and wild greens are ripe for picking. While working with Native communities, one must be patient with the rhythms of life--the seasons, the cycles, and the harvesting of foods.

One host replied that our collaboration boosted her confidence. She was recently hired by Kawerak Regional Native Corporation. Another responded that she would like our team to provide mentorship. She participated as a liaison before we had a mentee in place due to delayed response times from organizations. The lesson learned was to not begin production unless all co-creators are confirmed.

I have not attached feedback questionnaires since they are culturally specific and unique to the creative project at hand. It is also my intention to protect the knowledge-holders involved. A few questions may be generally applied: (1) Did our team respectfully engage with locals? (2) Were the questions relevant to their community? (3) Were they made comfortable being interviewed by a local youth host? (4) Would they like to share any information regarding their overall experience? (5) How could we improve our engagement process?

Contribution

My research contribution is a fundamental alternative to storytelling in filmmaking. It pushes back against the detrimental Western anthropological approach to Indigenous stories I want to help facilitate for our community to share.

Indigenous mistrust of science on the one hand and scientific disbelief in Indigenous knowledges on the other, have in common a tendency to evaluate each other according to limited criteria there is room for each system to find accommodation by the other without distorting the fundamental values and principles upon which each rest.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Durie, "Understanding Health and Illness."

The Drum Song and Spirit Mask methodological model reveals synergies and develops community engagement frameworks. This co-created research may be internationally significant as it contributes to creative arts pedagogies and Indigenous praxis by visual mapping for Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, communities, and filmmakers alike. I have positioned myself as a listener and facilitator in decolonizing filmmaking processes to ensure that co-creators can verbalize their own voices. Through this process, my life has been enriched by working co-creatively with Alaskan Native communities from whom I have learned and to whom I give thanks for the gift of sharing their stories.

Conclusion: Closing the Circle

“Our music is a rich cultural heritage of intergenerational knowledge sharing”.¹⁰⁸

Alaskan oral histories involve community drum songs, which include multi-generational group singing and dancing. I associate drum songs with Indigenous systems thinking, which emphasizes the importance of community wellbeing; their relationality and dependency upon each other, lands, and waters for survival; social interaction and intergenerational knowledge sharing; preservation of Indigenous knowledge, language, spirituality, and traditional practices passed on for future generations. Resonating through group collaboration and learning from each other is how our peoples have survived the extreme weather and harsh living conditions in rural Alaska for “approximately 15,000 years.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Thomas F. Johnston, "Alaskan Eskimo Dance in Cultural Context," *Dance Research Journal* 7, no. 2 (1975): 1-11.

¹⁰⁹ Hayden Chakra, "The First Settlement of the Americas (c. 15,000 Years Ago)," About History, posted March 10, 2021. <https://about-history.com/the-first-settlement-of-the-americas-c-15000-years-ago/>.

In utilizing CBPAR, we must ask: Are we making a positive difference for the researched?¹¹⁰ If a researcher or filmmaker uses Multiple-eyed Seeing along with CBPAR and allows the feedback to resonate, much as one would with drum songs, new innovations will naturally emerge. *Drum Song: The Rhythm of Life* documentary trailer speaks to the project ethos and the benefits of using a method of research deployment that is relevant to my community because it increases research and invites more community feedback.¹¹¹ Positioning as a listener and employing feedback loops are invaluable strategies to ensure agentic representation within Indigenous storytelling and media production, so films such as *Nanook of the North* are no longer the benchmark. Each stage of the research and filmmaking processes have been and will continue to be led and approved by the local communities who have co-created it, so we may "lift the diversity of our voices"¹¹² and resound together.

¹¹⁰ Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies* (1999).

¹¹¹ Rick Colbourne, Peter Moroz, Craid Hall, Kelly Lendsay, and Robert B. Anderson. "Indigenous Works and Two Eyed Seeing: Mapping the Case for Indigenous-Led Research." *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An Internatinoal Journal* 15, no.1 (2019): 68-86, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1177180117741351>.

¹¹² Tabodondung, "Indigenous Perspectives," 130-147.

Appendix

(hyperlinked)

1. Drum Song: The Rhythm of Life documentary
 - a. [Trailer](#)
 - b. [Treatment One Sheet](#)
 - c. [Fundraiser Video](#)
2. [Black and White Gallery: A Video Sampling of Co-Creator Portraits](#)
3. [Behind The Scenes Video of Community Localhost](#)
4. Narrative Reflections
 - a. [Digital Art and Poetry](#)
 - b. [The Grapevine](#)
 - c. [Ground-truthing](#)
 - d. [Reclamation](#) (Land Stewardship Song)
 - e. [Cradle Me](#) (Love Song to the Land, Instrumental Version)
 - f. [Black Smoke](#) (Extractive Industries Protest Song)
5. [Research Diary](#)
6. [Behind The Scenes: Crew Photographs and Videos on Instagram](#)
7. [UNFCCC COP26 ICCI Cryosphere Pavilion Presentation: "Indigenous Climate Adaptation and Mitigation: Responses from Alaska and Tokelau"](#)
8. Legal Documents
 - a. [Attestation of Authorship](#)
 - b. [Intellectual Property Rights](#)
 - c. [Embargo](#)

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