

**Decolonizing research paradigms in the context of settler colonialism:
An unsettling, mutual and collaborative effort
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This research addresses the first core Fish-WIKS question, namely **how and to what extent are different knowledge systems incorporated into fisheries governance and processes in Canada?**

A brief introduction on the specific issue being addressed

Research conducted under the Fish-WIKS project is situated at the interface of Western and Indigenous knowledge systems. All scholarly research, whether explicitly stated or not, is informed by a research paradigm, i.e. by a set of philosophical assumptions, which in turn informs the research methodology and the methods, i.e. the why and how the research is undertaken. As there are multiple readings of our world, there are multiple research paradigms.

Envisioning my research with Inuit hunters and fishermen in Nunavut to be an equitable and collaborative endeavour, I had to look into ways to be true to both my western approach to research and their Inuit way of knowing. The question I asked was whether this was even possible and if so, how it would work. I combed through the literature to see how other researchers had dealt with this conundrum.

Why it was important to address this issue

Colonial agendas have systematically marginalized Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing. Over the past decades, the critique of this inequality grew louder and so did the call for decolonization and reconciliation. To advance this de-colonization process, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Canada put forth a final report that included 94 calls to action. About a quarter of these calls to action are concerned with Indigenous ways of knowing as they relate to education and teaching, law and justice, and language and spirituality. If decolonization is supposed to be more than 'hot air,' then Indigenous knowledge systems need to be emancipated vis-à-vis western ways of knowing (in research, in teaching, in academia in general, in government and decision making).

What are the key findings from the research

- Indigenous research has been undertaken for millennia.

- Decolonizing research is a more recent endeavour.
- Some western research paradigms share certain assumptions and aspirations with Indigenous research paradigms; thus, scholars have tried to use them in tandem. It is an uneasy fit, however, as the two paradigms are based on very different philosophical systems.
- Another common approach is to keep Indigenous and western research paradigms separate due to their distinct underlying philosophies. This approach, however, does not allow researchers to mutually engage Indigenous and western ways of knowing.
- Thus, I proposed a third route where a new way of creating knowledge (i.e. a new research paradigm) is co-produced by Indigenous and western scholars with the aspiration of true and full decolonization, understood as a mutual endeavor with an unpredictable outcome.

What are some of the main policy Implications arising from the findings

- Indigenous knowledge systems are at a par with western ways of knowing; therefore, they need to be equally used in the generation of new knowledge (e.g. when trying to do stock assessments) and equally heard in the decision-making process.
- This will be a challenge for DFO as they currently only accept peer-reviewed publications to be used as knowledge base. Another challenge is that Indigenous knowledge is passed down from generation to generation orally and thus may not be available in written form.
- Indigenous knowledge is vetted in its own way, e.g. by being collective rather than individual. It is also highly relational. Thus, sustained and respectful relationships will be key to working together.

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