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Because We Love Our Communities: Indigenous Women Talk About Their Experiences as Community-Based Health Researchers

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Abstract

An increasing focus on Indigenous scholars in faculty hiring across academic institutions in North America has led to burgeoning scholarship and discourse about Indigenous research methodologies. Indigenous health research has set the pathway around Indigenous research ethics and community-based participatory research. Embedded in this scholarship is the discussion of relationships as central to the research, so who we are, personally and professionally, is integral to the research that is done. This article explores the experiences of university-based Indigenous women who perform community-based participatory health research and how personal and professional identities factor into this kind of work. Several key findings emerged, including identity, emotional investment and responsibility, workplace challenges related to gender and Indigeneity, and the needs of university-based Indigenous women researchers.

Keywords: Indigenous health, community based research, research ethics, Indigenous research ethics, Indigenous academics

I think as researchers we engage in community-based work both because we love our communities, and because they love us. (Research Participant 1)

The last two decades have seen a burgeoning scholarship and dialogue about Indigenous research methodologies; this body of literature has included several monographs and collections (Absolon, 2011; Chilisa, 2012; Denzin et al., 2008; Kovach, 2009; Mertens et al., 2013; Tuhiwai Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Recent reviews of Indigenous research methodologies and methods have identified key and common characteristics, including involving Indigenous peoples in all phases of the research, recognizing and prioritizing Indigenous ways of knowing, and grounding the research in relationships and the interconnectedness of peoples and all things (Drawson et al., 2017; Levac et al., 2018). In a systematic review of 64 articles referring to Indigenous research methodologies, Drawson et al. (2017) identified "contextual reflection" as one of three components that cut across the articles they reviewed, stating that "researchers must situate themselves and the Indigenous peoples with whom they are collaborating in the research process" (p. 15). Relationship building has been identified as critically important to Indigenous research methodologies (Flicker & Worthington, 2012; Marsh et al., 2015; Moore et al., 2017; Riddell et al., 2017) and, as Drawson et al. (2017) suggested, these relationships are built from contextual places and identities. Who we are, personally and professionally, is thus integral to the research that is done.

Although researchers have written about their experiences conducting community-based Indigenous health research in a number of recent articles (Baker, 2016; Dockstator et al., 2016; Gabel & Cameron,

2016; Gaudet, 2014; Henry et al., 2016; LaVallee et al., 2016; Tobias et al., 2013), discussion about the influence of researcher identity has been limited. Some researchers have written about insider/outsider dynamics of performing Indigenous research (Innes, 2009; de Leeuw et al., 2012; Marsh et al., 2015), and others have asserted the importance of being forthcoming about who we are when we enter into research relationships (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Riddell et al., 2017; Wiebe et al., 2016). Ball and Janyst (2008) have suggested that "researchers who hope to engage with Indigenous people need to be able to account for themselves, for example, by providing details of their ancestry, family life, scholarship, and intentions, not only during initial introductions, but throughout a project" (p. 38), and Kovach (2015) has stated, "In applying Indigenous methodologies, researchers are putting forth an identity standpoint (whether they desire this or not) and there is an expectation for them to engage in anti-colonial work" (p. 57).

As Indigenous women in higher education who perform community-based participatory research (CBPR), we (Author 1 and Author 2) were curious about how personal and professional identities factor into the kind of work we do; we wanted to know more about our peers' experiences as female Indigenous university-based health researchers. Castleden et al. (2012) have expressed a similar interest in their exploration of the tensions involved between theorizing and practicing Indigenous CBPR. They concluded their paper by suggesting, "It would be interesting to expand on this study to look at whether more academic women are engaging in CBPR, why they are choosing this path, and how they juggle their academic–community–personal responsibilities" (Castleden et al., 2012, p. 176).

Methodology

In order to explore the experiences of university-based Indigenous women health researchers, we began by interviewing each other. We then invited eight of our peers to engage in "conversational method" (Kovach, 2010) one-on-one discussions with us about Indigenous research methodologies; Indigenous community-based health research; working in a post-Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP®) environment; capacity challenges; issues related to Indigenous identities; issues related to gendered identities; and any advice they might have for junior Indigenous colleagues taking up this work. We knew all of these women personally, socially, and professionally, and felt a kinship with them as part of a small national community of university-based Indigenous women health researchers. In some cases, our participants have been leaders in initiating the new research ethics and self-determined research practices in Indigenous communities and in fact have acted as mentors to us. Other participants, like us, "grew up" through these Indigenous health networks and practices that were established by such mentors. As authors of this article, and subjects deeply embroiled in the experiences we were asking about, we decided to begin our inquiry by interviewing each other. We have included our own interview material as data, as it was in keeping with the data we collected out of the semistructured discussions with our colleagues and suited the autoethnographic nature of our questions. We feel it unnecessary to discuss issues of bias and validity, as this article is based on not only the authors' personal experiences, but also those of our closest colleagues.

We began by asking what the women understood and practiced as Indigenous research methodologies, and then we moved on to discuss the challenges and experiences particular to our identities as Indigenous women who are also university-based researchers. We wanted to know what it means to work in practice within the theories, principles, and standards that have been introduced. We were also interested in the lens that the women bring to this work, and what it means from their/our positioning as invested Indigenous community members. Interviews were conducted in person where possible, although due to distance, some were conducted over the phone. We then transcribed all of the interviews and coded this information in NVivo (Version 12), using the constant and comparative method and drawing from grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) to identify recurring themes. Using these same transcripts, we have already written about how our gendered, Indigenous identities have influenced our work, and how the work has influenced us personally and professionally (Anderson & Cidro, 2019). In this article, we will focus on how our identities and positioning as Indigenous women have influenced our experiences in conducting

Indigenous community-based research. We have drawn from all of the conversations, including conversations with each other, as our identities and experiences align, intertwine, and inform the questions we wanted to explore. The research underwent ethics review and approval through the Wilfrid Laurier University Research Ethics Board. Several key findings emerged, including identity, emotional investment and responsibility, workplace challenges related to gender and Indigeneity, and the needs of university-based Indigenous women researchers.

Findings

Situating Ourselves: Identity, Emotional Investment, and Responsibility

Our first finding was that the participants' motivations and approaches in doing community-based health research were very much connected to personal identities, commitments, and responsibilities to community. Participant 8 equated her Indigenous identity with Indigenous methodologies, stating, "I feel like any research I do as an Indigenous person is going to be an Indigenous methodology . . . because of who I am and where I come from and the things that I care about." Another participant, who performs archival research as part of her health research, talked about feeling a duty to protect the identities of the participants she finds, even though this is not a requirement. When asked why, she explained, "Because I find my own relatives in the archives" and noted, "You have to be careful with the information because some of the things [you find] are not happy things" (Participant 1). A number of participants talked about being invested in the research because of kinship responsibilities and relationships, including close as well as extended kinship networks. Participant 5 stated, "Ninety percent of our [research] relationships have nothing to do with academia," noting that our work has more to do with responsibilities to our communities.

Situating ourselves as Indigenous women who are part of communities, however they are defined, was thus identified as a central part of our CBPR work. Participant 7 even talked about feeling awkward doing research with Indigenous peoples other than her own: "I don't know anything about research in the north. I'm from rural [province] and so I felt weird about [getting an opportunity] to do research in an Inuit community. I was very, very uncomfortable doing that."

Some participants, however, mentioned that doing work in our own communities can be more difficult than doing it elsewhere. As one participant stated: "Don't do research in your own community; they will play you!" (Participant 3). This was said in a lighthearted manner but followed with a story about how one of her students was taken advantage of by her own community. This participant and another pointed out that having research funds can put one at risk of being pressured to use them in ways that are not suitable to the goals of the research. In cases like this, the researcher can get caught between the community and the institutions and funders they are accountable to as researchers.

Whether doing work in our own communities or in new ones, being grounded in one's own Indigenous culture and identity was deemed significant. Prior to beginning her own research project, Participant 6 was told by an Elder, "You have to go home, and be grounded in your roots. Know your culture. Know your own way. That way you don't go in asking misleading questions or making assumptions." The participant took away the message that she needed to be more grounded in her own people. She noted, "Don't assume because you're Ojibwe that you are going to understand the Cree way."

The expectation that we be culturally grounded in our own cultures as Indigenous women can bring added pressures, however, as noted by this participant:

> The one thing that I have a hard time with in the community is the demand that we know our language, our culture. And then that we also have PhDs. That is the new standard. . . . So there is this new demand. We are supposed to publish books, get research grants and teach—and at the same time, we are supposed to go to language classes, become fluent in our adult years and speak the language. [People] can hardly speak [the language], but they want you to—then we will get the respect from the community. (Participant 5)

This participant reflected on the amount of work involved in increasing culture-based

knowledge. Finding the time required to master things like one's Indigenous language is very difficult, especially if one is a mother. She stated, "It's a very unfair demand by the community," adding, "It's just, almost unhuman. You just can't do it."

Engaging in research that involves other Indigenous peoples, whether near or far, can involve emotional investment as well as stress. Participant 6, for example, talked about doing research in a province far from her home territory, and how, in spite of the pressures she faced, she felt a duty to keep going:

> [The community] needs to know we are doing this because we care. I've been thinking a lot about caring, and what occurs when we go into a community, especially as Indigenous researchers. I don't live in the community. I have this luxurious life and reality, and the more I go, the more I care, and the more I feel, and then the more I have things to say, and the more I want. Then I feel more responsible; a greater pressure to do a better job. I can't shut it off now. I couldn't quit even if I wanted to. I'm in—because of my investment, because of my relationship, and because I care. Once you go off that cliff there is no going back to turn that switch off and have amnesia. (Participant 6)

She talked further about how Indigenous researchers may need to "have good tools" for healing in the event that you hear hard stories in the community, pointing out that these tools are needed "when it touches a part of you that is unhealed" with reference to colonial-induced trauma.

Although this participant talked about feeling a duty to the youth in her research community in particular, other participants talked about having a primary responsibility to the Indigenous organizations they work with, especially if those organizations asked them to assist. A few participants talked about how they felt they weren't able to live up to the standards of community service, given the other pressures on their time they experience as faculty members:

> I feel like I should be in [the community] more. . . . I do my best for capacity building, but again I still feel like I should be doing more. But if I do more there, then I'm not doing a good enough job with my teaching or I'm not publishing enough. There's always that. (Participant 7)

Some of the women expressed the difficulties in negotiating their position as university-based Indigenous researchers. A few talked about how having a PhD can put you at odds with the community, and cause tensions in relationship building: "It's assumed that, because I'm a professor, I'm self-serving" (Participant 6). Participant 3 and Participant 2 offered corroboration:

> Even if we don't try, just by virtue of having achieved this education, people feel intimidated. I sure as hell don't go around saying I'm doctor, blah blah blah. Even with my own family, they can get their head wrapped around teaching, but the rest of it—if I told them what I do, it would be a silent room. It's about how to be in that in-between space. (Participant 3)

> I feel more restricted in terms of having to get over that barrier of people seeing me as a university-based researcher. You know what I'm talking about—"all you academics." I think anybody who has a PhD in Indian country—that's not really to your advantage. So you don't talk about that and you try to approach it from [a] different way—I think the big tension is getting over that level of trust, or lack of trust, resentment. (Participant 2)

Some participants talked about increasing pressures of being perceived as self-serving academics as the discourse of self-determined research evolves and is taken up uncritically. One participant gave the example of a long-term research relationship that she had with a community. The relationship had evolved respectfully and organically, but it changed after her community partner attended a workshop on OCAP® and community-driven research. The community partner left the workshop with the understanding that complete community control was the new bar. She began to criticize the researcher for how the project had evolved and limited research team access to the data they had collected, which

they needed to complete the project.

In terms of other identity challenges, participants acknowledged our power and privilege as university-based researchers. Some talked about how this identity can be hard to reconcile when we work in community:

> We can do all that we can to break down some of those barriers but there's always tensions there. I'm the one who holds the grants. That feels sometimes icky to me for some reason, you know? . . . You can be the best community-based participatory researcher, and Indigenous person. But at the end of the day, [you are] the university researcher and they're the community. Even though you grew up in community—it's still going to be there. (Participant 4)

Participant 8 described the conflicting feelings we can have as Indigenous women when we are unusual in our families and communities by virtue of our privilege as academics:

> I have a lot of guilt that I earn what I earn. People always say like "God damn it, you have worked so hard all your life. And you know overcame, pretty unimaginable things" . . . and you know, I did have crappy stuff happen to me because I am a Native person. (Participant 8)

Because of these conflicting spaces, some participants noted that it is all the more important to create "hybrid spaces" for Indigenous students where they can find research opportunities with faculty who are both members of community and academics.

Workplace Challenges Related to Gender and Indigeneity

Several participants talked about how the pace of their research is compromised by administrative and service loads related to their Indigenous identities. They noted that university service is often overwhelming for young Indigenous academics who are asked to take on responsibilities that would normally go to older, tenured faculty. Some felt a pressure to take these positions to support the work of "Indigenizing the academy," but also because they worried that the work would not get done, or that it would fall to another one of their Indigenous colleagues. Two participants describe these experiences:

> If you're a new researcher embedded in a university, you might be the Native at that university, and everybody and their dog wants you on every committee because you have to bring the Native perspective. (No pressure!) You know if you don't go there won't be anybody there who is speaking on behalf of Indigenous people. So you go and you end up working double time at everything because you're representing your community, and then you're doing the job that everybody else has to do. (Participant 3)

> Being the [director-administrator] wasn't really a choice. I could've said no. [My Indigenous colleague] could have said no to being the director of [other area] too—she still didn't have her PhD. . . . Then I look at my non-Indigenous women colleagues who will go and take their vacations, and who can say "no"—who can pick and choose the administrative positions when it's convenient for them and their careers. As junior faculty, and as Indigenous women scholars, we just don't have that same sort of control. Everyone says, "You could say no." But then someone else gets it and then it puts on [Indigenous colleague]. (Participant 7)

Some participants talked about being invited to join research teams, take the lead on grants or apply for funding that is not of particular interest, mainly because their positioning as Indigenous scholars helps the grant application. These requests often come from departmental colleagues or community members or organizations, making it difficult to say "no."

> You can be pulled in many directions; some well-intentioned, and some not well-intentioned partners want to engage with Indigenous communities. You [are asked to] become their partner, or their token partner, because you are Indigenous, and/or you have experience working with Indigenous communities. (Participant 9)

Gender also feeds into both the opportunities and challenges of the work of the women. The book *Presumed Incompetent*, which deals with the discrimination that women in general face in the academy—where men are presumed to be more competent than women (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012)—was identified by a participant. Our participants made comments that supported the claims made by this research: "It's difficult to be a woman researcher and negotiate everybody's expectations, and then know that your male counterparts are getting a much more relaxed . . . not judgement, maybe but status. They achieve it much easier, without so much questioning" (Participant 5). Participant 2 also described this gender component:

> I think people are more likely to take advantage of us as women, or be—maybe not downright disrespectful—but dismissive of our skills and training and just see us coming with money that they can use to do whatever they want to do. (Participant 2)

Some of the women talked about the advantages and disadvantages of being mothers and researchers at the same time. On the one hand, motherhood can be advantageous, as it provides a level of familiarity in terms of building relationships with research communities. Several of the women have taken their children with them on research trips; all of this is aided by the general welcoming that children are given in research communities:

> I ended up bringing my child a lot to [the research community] from the time he was a baby until he was 2 and couldn't fly for free anymore. I think that really helped because of the research I was doing on family health, in terms of legitimizing myself as having babies just like everyone else, and having poop on my elbow just like everybody else. (Participant 4)

In terms of disadvantages, participants noted that mothering also adds to the stress and increases overall workload. Some of the women talked about having to go back to work too early from maternity leave for financial reasons, and others talked about how they worked all through their maternity leave due to the demands of their careers and professions. The mothers talked about how workload challenges are further exacerbated in contexts where women still do most of the caregiving. One (Participant 7) talked about the multiple pressures of "administrative responsibilities and home responsibilities and community responsibilities," stating, "I think it's a lot harder for women and Indigenous women in particular. I feel like . . . I'm a shitty mom sometimes, or a shitty wife. I'm so overworked, I just can't seem to do anything really well." Another compared her situation with male colleagues who might not have children or others they support, or who might not be the ones worrying about day care pickup or running home to cook supper. She referred to the pressures of being expected to work in community while at the same time being judged for the time this takes from family:

> If I left my kids to run to ceremonies all the time, teach language, I know the community would judge me as being selfish. "When are you ever with your kids?" Like I've heard that. You know, because they want you to be a stay at home mom. So the fact that you are a working mom, [they are] already not thrilled with your mothering. And then if they see you at all these language classes—I have got that question: "When do you have time for your kids?" "Who is watching your kids?" (Participant 5)

In spite of the challenges related to identity, participants also offered positive comments about how their Indigenous female identities aided in the production of knowledge. As one participant put it: "The positives of being an Indigenous woman researcher is our growing together. One woman said, 'You are really helping us turn new soil' by simply asking the questions in the way that I do" (Participant 6).

Needs of University-Based Indigenous Women Researchers

Participants indicated that the effort and time required to build community relations and then produce deliverables in CBPR is still not recognized in the academy. Participant 7 mentioned completing a lengthy community-based report from one of her projects, which, in spite of taking years of work, went in as a "report" on her c.v. She noted that this does not gain much

recognition in the academy compared to an academic paper, "even though it was way more work than any publication." Other participants talked about how community-based research work remains invisible and can threaten career advancement:

> This problem has been noted in terms of the trajectory of Indigenous scholars in faculty positions. We often find that it's longer points to tenure, and there are fewer people in tenure track positions to begin with. Often it's because of the time that we devote to our students and these community-based research projects that we are in. We don't publish as much, etc. We have been talking for a long time about having those things taken into consideration when you are going through tenure review. But my department would know nothing about that. (Participant 1)

Recognition of the time involved in doing Indigenous community-based research, especially for pretenured scholars, is thus important. As Participant 1 noted, "You have to be prepared for some pieces of your work to take a very, very long time to reach the public."

Having Indigenous mentors was noted as critical for both students and faculty. Participant 9 commented on the need for more Indigenous faculty members, stating, "You could have a supervisory committee that doesn't have any Indigenous people on it. I can't imagine what that's like." She added that Indigenous faculty members "are too few and far between—and they are overworked." Another participant identified a need for more senior Indigenous women scholars and elders who are well versed in the academic world. She suggested that such mentors need to be "on the committees and in partnerships and every part of our research relationship" (Participant 6). Some of the women talked about being isolated in their departments; as Participant 6 remarked, "Who do you talk to about your experiences?" Others talked about the benefits of having Indigenous scholars in their academic environments:

> We need to have a network, and not just to have a researching network, but a network where we can actually do things [together] and talk about stuff. We are lucky. My office is like this little oasis of Indigeneity where people get my jokes and we can talk. But what if one was all alone? (Participant 2)

Indigenous mentors were thus considered critical. When asked for her advice to younger scholars, Participant 9 suggested, "Seek out a mentor, even beyond your supervisor if need be, because not everybody gets an Indigenous supervisor." Some of the more senior scholars talked about helping younger Indigenous faculty learn how to access Tri-Council research grants and how to work with the system to be supported in their research.

In spite of all the challenges and needs identified in the conversations, participants typically began and concluded by affirming that they do the work because it validates who they are, where they come from, and their commitment to Indigenous communities:

> Everything I'm learning or doing with the community is part of me. Yesterday at the address I talked about learning through our grandmothers. This young guy said, "When I think about the land, I think about my grandmother." I feel like the benefit is that I can talk about my spirit getting fatter, and that is felt wherever I go. When I teach a university class I am always bringing the community, and it is always becoming more of a part of me. (Participant 6)

> In some ways, I admire my colleagues who do [nonhuman research] because they can sit in the lab and just do it, and not be bothered by any of this relationship building. At the same time, I think about how empty that would be. I don't think I would be a researcher if I had to sit in a lab. It wouldn't be meaningful to me. I think that relationship building has provided me with—not self-esteem building, but building meaning—for me as a person, it has helped me. (Participant 4)

Participant 7 noted, "I feel as though I will never stop doing community work because that's what I do." She then added, "But I

also feel like institutions need to understand and be more supportive."

Discussion

Our conversations with peers validated personal and professional experiences related to identities as university-based Indigenous women engaged in CBPR health research in an era of academic "Indigenization." We were reminded that who we are does, indeed, influence our approaches, practices, and experiences in doing Indigenous health research, as well as how we account for ourselves, how we are measured, and how we, in turn, judge ourselves. These identities offer distinct advantages as well as pressures and challenges, as described by our research participants/peers.

First, when "we do it because we love our communities," we are validated in our commitment to contribute to the health of our peoples, and we fulfill personal needs related to ongoing extended kinship responsibilities. However, as Participant 6 pointed out, this emotional investment can also mean that we experience vicarious trauma, and we need to work at being "grounded." Emotional turmoil can also result when conflict arises with our own communities, as exemplified in stories we heard about communities who took advantage of researchers or disregarded their needs.

We were also reminded through this research that, as Indigenous researchers working in the academy, we experience distinct pressures. The awareness of our tremendous privilege vis-à-vis our families or the general Indigenous population can cause feelings of guilt or discomfort, and our identities can put us at odds with families and communities. Our university positions can also affect research and other relationships, especially when we need to negotiate through perceptions that we are self-serving academics. Elsewhere in the literature, we have seen evidence of this: Indigenous researchers who felt relationships changed once they began doing university-based research. Erik Mandawe, a Cree researcher, reflected on this experience as follows:

> Before being affiliated with the [research] project, amongst my peers I was known as a cultural teacher, a volleyball player, a recruiter, and (most simply put) a Cree guy from Toronto. I noticed that the further we went into this research and in putting myself more into the role of researcher, this perception in the community changed. I felt that my peers saw less of the other things I was involved with (ceremony, traditional teachings, etc.), and more to do with research. That word, "research," has an inherent negativity in the eye of many who identify as First Nations, as it may bring up a history of colonial abuse in both an academic and governmental sense (Smith, 2012). I've seen first-hand how some community members view "researchers" in the community, and those community members have chosen to share their thoughts and emotions with me—usually nothing overly positive to say, unless they are coming from an Indigenous background . . . there were times where I felt, "why am I doing this if it's making me feel like someone I'm not?" . . . This idea of "who am I and what am I doing?" has been a daily theme in wearing the researcher hat. (Smithers Graeme & Mandawe, 2017, p. 7)

In their article detailing their experiences doing action research, Dockstator et al. (2016) called for an "exploration of the 'academic world' as a monolithic generalization," asking, "Is it accurate to characterize academe in this way, in light of research team members who may be members of both Indigenous communities and academic ones?" (p. 34). This may be an area for further research, not only with regard to Indigenous researchers, but also in light of the turn to responsible and relational CBPR among health researchers doing work with Indigenous communities.

We recognize that CBPR researchers in various fields might connect with some of the issues identified here, but it is important to highlight and address that the experiences included in this CBPR article are specific to Indigenous researchers. Although there are some parallels to the experiences of non-Indigenous female CBPR faculty, such as the academy not recognizing the research productivity in CBPR compared to published papers, it is important to identify and not diminish the specific experiences of Indigenous researchers (Castleden et al., 2012). Indigenous researchers in

Canada are working in the distinct context of Indigenizing the academy and the era of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. As a result, there are additional pressures placed on Indigenous faculty to demonstrate their productivity, especially regarding Indigenizing the academy, yet their efforts are still judged through a colonial lens (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). The interviewees' experiences demonstrate the challenges that are unique to Indigenous CBPR researchers. For example, Indigenous researcher Erik Mandawe described how his community's perceptions of him changed negatively after he returned as a formal researcher.

In addition, Indigenous communities involved in CBPR often inherently distrust colonial institutions, such as universities, due to past negative relationships with self-serving academics (Lawrence et al., 2004; Mitchell, 2018). This distrust is a product of a colonial legacy and is something Indigenous researchers must actively work to repair in their research (Mitchell, 2018). We recognize that other marginalized communities have likely experienced similar situations, but we are explicitly referring to Indigenous communities and their experiences. This distrust is unique to Indigenous researchers and can cause tensions or resistance during the relationship-building process. Indigenous faculty are also put in a taxing position where they are forced to navigate their identity as both an Indigenous community member and researcher.

As with the participants we interviewed, other Indigenous researchers have expressed feeling caught between university and community identities and responsibilities. As some of the participants pointed out, being Indigenous can result in further pressures to be more culturally based or on a trajectory of Indigenous knowledge acquisition in addition to the credentials that we have earned through mainstream institutions. Feelings of not being "cultural" enough to measure up to community standards can translate into not feeling entitled to, or competent in, some of the Indigenous methodologies we undertake. These complicated identities and practices have been articulated by Amanda LaVallee in describing the process she undertook while performing her doctoral research. She writes about feeling "not Métis enough to engage in Métis methods," stating:

> I felt as though my fair skin and education disenfranchised me from my Métis knowledge and culture. As a Métis scholar living and working in my community, I have been faced with tensions between our community knowledge and my academic training. I felt a consistent struggle between my feelings of legitimacy within my community and those within the academy. I was constantly negotiating Euro-Western and Métis knowledge. I was terrified about what my community might see or think of me; and I also felt the overwhelming pressure to complete and successfully pass my dissertation. I was fueled by the fear of what other people thought of me, the potential judgment of others, and the fear of the unfamiliar (Métis research methods: for example, Elder guidance and Sharing Circles). I felt completely vulnerable. (LaVallee et al., 2016, pp. 177–178)

Other pressures often felt by the university-based researchers we interviewed correspond to previous work that identifies a fault line between CBPR work and the recognition and support it is afforded by university systems. Scholars have written about how pressures to publish are incongruent with the time and relationship building it takes to do CBPR (Castleden et al., 2015; Gabel & Cameron, 2016; Tobias et al., 2013), and some have asked if this pressure is in the best interests of the research participant community (Dockstator et al., 2016). Scholars are presenting ongoing challenges toward tenure and promotion committees recognizing the work involved in Indigenous CBPR (McGregor et al., 2016; Moore et al., 2017). Castleden et al. (2015) have written about how engaging in CBPR with Indigenous communities can put researchers behind in academic measures of merit, which include publishing, speaking, and obtaining grants, and they have asked "whether the ways in which the requirements of tenure and promotion processes have the potential to create a conflict between researchers' relational accountability to Indigenous community partners, and their academic accountability to their disciplines and peers" (p. 2).

The added administrative workload often felt by Indigenous scholars can exacerbate

stress about having the time to produce work that will allow us to advance through university merit systems. This, too, has been noted for many years: Referencing a 2004 publication by Deloria, McGregor et al. (2016) have pointed out that "the Indigenous scholar will be the one most likely to do 'double duty' as members on university committees, and to serve as 'authorities' on any matter Indigenous" (p. 5). Junior scholars who do "double duty," administrative and service, while also doing the invisible work building community relations can find their tenure and promotion progress at risk.

Finally, the discourse of CBPR sets a high bar that many of us struggle to meet, especially around engaging in research that is truly "community driven," which nurtures relationships and fulfills responsibilities to Indigenous communities over the long term. The discourse can lead to anxiety caused by feelings of not measuring up to an Indigenous CBPR standard—feelings that can be exacerbated when we have other work and family commitments. In some of the conversations, what came out is that we are spread too thin and as a result judge ourselves to be inadequate in multiple domains. This is also a gendered experience, particularly when it comes to the expectations and demands of mothering, and it offers some response to Castleden et al.'s (2012) query about how well women scholars "juggle their academic–community–personal responsibilities" (p. 176).

Implications and Areas of Future Research

As the recent reviews have demonstrated (Drawson et al., 2017; Levac et al., 2018), we now have a robust body of literature demonstrating the need to empower Indigenous communities with self-determined CBPR. We also have an emerging body of research about how universities and other institutions can recognize and facilitate the needs of CBPR researchers, including identifying problems with university research ethics processes and working toward improvements (Alcock et al., 2017; Ball & Janyst, 2008; Glass & Kaufert, 2007; Guta et al., 2010; Guta et al., 2013; Moore et al., 2017; Riddell et al., 2017; Stiegman & Castleden, 2012), working out better funding and finance systems (Bull, 2008; Moore et al., 2017; Riddell et al., 2017), and developing systems that recognize the time and effort that goes into CBPR (Alcock et al., 2017; Ball & Janyst, 2008; Dockstator et al., 2016; Flicker & Worthington, 2012; Stiegman & Castleden, 2012). What has received relatively little discussion is how community partners can understand and support the needs of CBPR researchers, and how both university and community can recognize the needs of Indigenous researchers. In interviews with health researchers, research ethics board representatives, financial services administrators, and Mik'maw community health directors, Moore et al. (2017) have pointed out that there is often limited understanding between distinct groups involved in CBPR research processes.

We acknowledge the limitations of our small sample, but hope that this article has shed some light on the distinct experiences of university-based Indigenous women health researchers, so that we may ease the personal and professional experiences of our next generation. Other areas that require further exploration are the impact of academic "Indigenization" on Indigenous scholars and on the research relationships with Indigenous communities. Often the connections between universities and Indigenous communities are formed by student interactions with the institutions as well as faculty engaging in research with communities. We increasingly see the addition of university executive-level officials, such as the vice president and provost levels, that are focused on engaging in external relationship building with Indigenous communities. Understanding how these newly created positions support the community-based research of Indigenous researchers (or negate it) would be an interesting exploration. In addition, exploring the impact of Indigenous female academics who often are placed in these executive roles in undertaking "Indigenization" efforts is critical to understanding the larger workload issues that Indigenous women in the academy specifically face.

Conclusion

The conversations that took place among our female Indigenous friends and colleagues as part of this work represent conversations that take place in many areas of research, not just Indigenous health research. The dialogue is often riddled with stories that are funny and absurd, but also demonstrate remarkable strength and determination to work through these tensions. We were once

those newly minted scholars trying to publish articles, secure grants, and eventually obtain tenure and promotion. As authors and participants described, many of us are now in a moment in time when we can reflect on our careers and determine how we can best clear the path for our Indigenous colleagues coming up into the academy.

Our participants described how the emotional investment and their identity were closely tied to the work they did. In many cases, the work of our participants is deeply personal and touches these parts of our being that are wounded from the effects of colonization. Although participants on the one hand are engaging in deeply meaningful work based on relationships with community, they are also challenged from a personal perspective because we are unable to step away into the role of an objective observer. The volume of administrative and service work that our participants experienced has meant a feeling of diminished control over our careers. As institutions work toward the lofty and, some would argue, unattainable goals of "Indigenization," Indigenous faculty are often looked upon to fill multiple roles that usually are work intensive. In the best-case scenario, these roles provide us with an opportunity to better position our academic work and highlight our collaborative research relationships and the ability to "turn new soil." In worst-case scenarios, the work is overly burdensome, and the negative impacts are compounded by the gendered pressures of mothering and home and family expectations.

The needs of Indigenous-based research have meant that the path to tenure is sometimes longer, or harder fought. Reports and other engagement opportunities are often not recognized as "counting" in annual reviews and tenure and promotion. Participants described having Indigenous academic mentors throughout their career who clear the path. Despite these pressures, tensions, and stresses, participants felt that the work they engage in contributes to their personal development and, as one participant describes, makes their "spirit fatter." As Indigenous women, we know we are also entrusted with responsibilities to carry knowledge forward and to extend our kinship responsibilities. Clearing the path for newer generations of Indigenous health researchers also means that we need to have difficult conversations with our communities and research partners. The struggle is how do we communicate to our research partners and communities the academic expectations that are required of us without making the university sound inhospitable and hostile? How do we avoid positioning ourselves as intellectuals while still being able to engage in research that matters to communities? How do we avoid being considered as consultants and in-service to community, while at the same time needing to stretch our skills as those with a PhD who are trained to philosophize about the world around us? These conversations are critical in a new era of "Indigenization" in our academic institutions. It is also important for academic institutions to recognize this type of academic labor that Indigenous scholars who do CBPR engage in and consider how tenure and promotion and annual reviews can be performed in ways that validate the extensive work that goes into building and maintaining relationships with Indigenous communities and the conflicting obligations that Indigenous female scholars face. Indigenous female scholars have benefited and continue to benefit from a path that has been laid out, and it is our job to continue to clear that path for those who are coming up behind us.

Note

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