

# Navigating across anthropological and Haudenosaunee knowledge: Co-developing research using CBPR and Kaswenta (Two-Row Wampum) principles in partnership with Six Nations of the Grand River

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Article abstract

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# Navigating Across Anthropological and Haudenosaunee Knowledge: Co-Developing Research using CBPR and Kaswenta (Two-Row Wampum) Principles in Partnership with Six Nations of the Grand River

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## Abstract

As part of the *Ohneganos* research project, funded through the Global Water Futures (GWF), we document the ways we worked across Haudenosaunee and anthropological knowledge to assess the impact of water insecurity on holistic maternal health. This research was led by the Six Nation Birthing Center (SNBC), inspired by Haudenosaunee *Kaswenta* treaty principles. We utilized community-based participatory research (CBPR) and Indigenous research methods (IRMs), such as storytelling, to find a common ground of dialogue and reciprocity. In doing so, this research goes beyond traditional anthropological ways of data collection and fieldwork and highlights the importance of active community direction and participation. We argue that different knowledge from the researchers does not need to be ignored or reduced to one singular perspective to work across worldviews. Instead, acknowledging and highlighting the differences will lead to innovative methods and scholarship. This paper contributes to the literature on research methods and policies and will be helpful to Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous researchers working together.

## Keywords

location work, edgework, working across epistemologies, CBPR, IRMs, Two-Row wampum, partial connections, equivocation, actions research, ethnography.

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## Navigating Across Anthropological and Haudenosaunee Knowledge: Co-Developing Research using CBPR and Kaswenta (Two-Row Wampum) Principles in Partnership with Six Nations of the Grand River

*Ohneganos Ohnegahde:gyo* is an Indigenous research program funded through the Global Water Futures (GWF), designed and directed by the Six Nations community, and grounded in Haudenosaunee (the people of the longhouse) philosophy and teachings. Weaving both Western scientific knowledge and Indigenous science for sustainable solutions to water and environmental ‘problems,’ *Ohneganos Ohnegahde:gyo* has progressed with ongoing consultation with Six Nations (SN) partners where academic researchers have worked with community stakeholders to investigate the impact of water insecurity on SN maternal health. Indigenous knowledge (IK) pedagogy framework helped develop the research project with the community and for the community (Martin-Hill, 2021). As a part of the *Ohneganos* research project and a Ph.D. dissertation, this research was conducted in collaboration with *Tsi Non: We Ionnakeratstha Ona:Grahsta*, meaning “the place they will be born” in Mohawk, or “a birthing place” in Cayuga, also known as the Six Nations Birthing Center (SNBC). We investigated the interrelationship of water insecurity and its implications for the holistic health of SN mothers living in the reserve, an under-researched area identified by the SNBC. This research progressed following the guidance of the SNBC at its every step, significantly, during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic. This paper details the process, not the findings, of our collaboration using community-based participatory research (CBPR) through critical medical anthropology (CMA) and Haudenosaunee principles drawn from *Kaswenta* or Two-Row Wampum treaty. *Kaswenta* teaches not to diminish or ignore differences between different worldviews, but to honour and celebrate them for peaceful co-existence, achieving common goals, and reaching sustainable solutions.

Positionality is important in research with Indigenous communities as it rejects the notion of objectivity established in positivist research and helps build trust with the community and readers. Providing the researchers’ worldviews and socio-political context, positionality highlights biases in the research (Holmes, 2020; Wilson, 2008). In addition to challenging objectivity, decolonizing the minds of researchers is also crucial (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). Similarly, reflexivity has been a critical component in contemporary ethnographic research as it highlights the political nature of ethnography and rejects the idea of objectivity and neutrality in research (Hammersley, 2006). Jean-Paul Dumont (1991, p.5) argues that anthropologists or researchers themselves work as a research tool and are an integral part of fieldwork; therefore, any attempt to claim that anthropology is objective is flawed.

Invited by the *Ohneganos* project principal investigator (PI), Dr. Dawn Martin-Hill, the midwives at the SNBC and I, the first author, worked together to co-create knowledge about the interrelationship between water security and maternal health. Dawn Martin-Hill and Julie Wilson are Haudenosaunee women. Dawn resides at the Six Nations reserve, is a faculty member at McMaster University in the Department of Anthropology and Indigenous Studies Program, and has over 35 years of work experience in the community. Julie works full-time as a supervisor midwife and director at the SNBC. Julie is trained in both Western and Haudenosaunee medical models and has over 20 years of experience as a Haudenosaunee midwife at the SNBC. I, Afroza Sultana, am the mother of an eight-year-old

daughter. I have recently finished my PhD in anthropology from McMaster University, and I am currently working as a postdoctoral fellow in the School of Global Health at York University. I am not an Indigenous person in Canada. I am an immigrant and a member of a visible minority in Canada, born and raised in Bangladesh. I moved to Canada for higher studies. As a member of a non-Western society, I have been part of a history of being colonized as a nation—a nation that had fought for their land and language and achieved freedom and independence. I am trained in both cultural and medical anthropology. I received cultural and academic training about Indigenous knowledge and Haudenosaunee teachings as a PhD student under Dawn's supervision, while Julie offered me her extensive training and knowledge on western and Haudenosaunee medical models in designing and guiding the research.

Along with *Kaswenta*, we were inspired by other principles of Haudenosaunee teachings, such as the Covenant Chain Treaty, to create and maintain a long-lasting trustful relationship and shared responsibilities between non-Indigenous researchers and Haudenosaunee knowledge holders. The Covenant Chain Treaty, established in the 17th century, teaches friendship and reciprocity to last for a long time (McCarthy, 2016). This teaching warns researchers against “parachute research” or “helicopter research,” where researchers only come into the community to extract knowledge and then disappear, taking what they need. The Two-Row Wampum and Covenant Chain treaties and teachings instead emphasize the long-term reciprocal relationship between the community and researchers. It encourages working through researchers' and communities' diversities, establishing mutual respect and trust, and finding common ground.

Despite increasing popularity of collaboration in community research across disciplines, community participation in most cases has been tokenistic. Moreover, despite Indigenous scholars and anthropologists' significant contribution to working across different worldviews (e.g. de la Cadena, 2015; Freeman & Katwyk, 2020), literature that demonstrates how to work across knowledge and epistemologies (worldviews), anthropology and Indigenous knowledge, in particular, remains scant. In this article, we aim to fill the gap in the literature by demonstrating two significant aspects of our collaborative research: 1. The SNBC's active participation in the research from conception to data analysis and 2. The ways we worked across anthropological and Haudenosaunee knowledge by creating a dialogical space with mutual respect and understanding inspired by the *Kaswenta* treaty as applied in the *Ohneganos* research project.

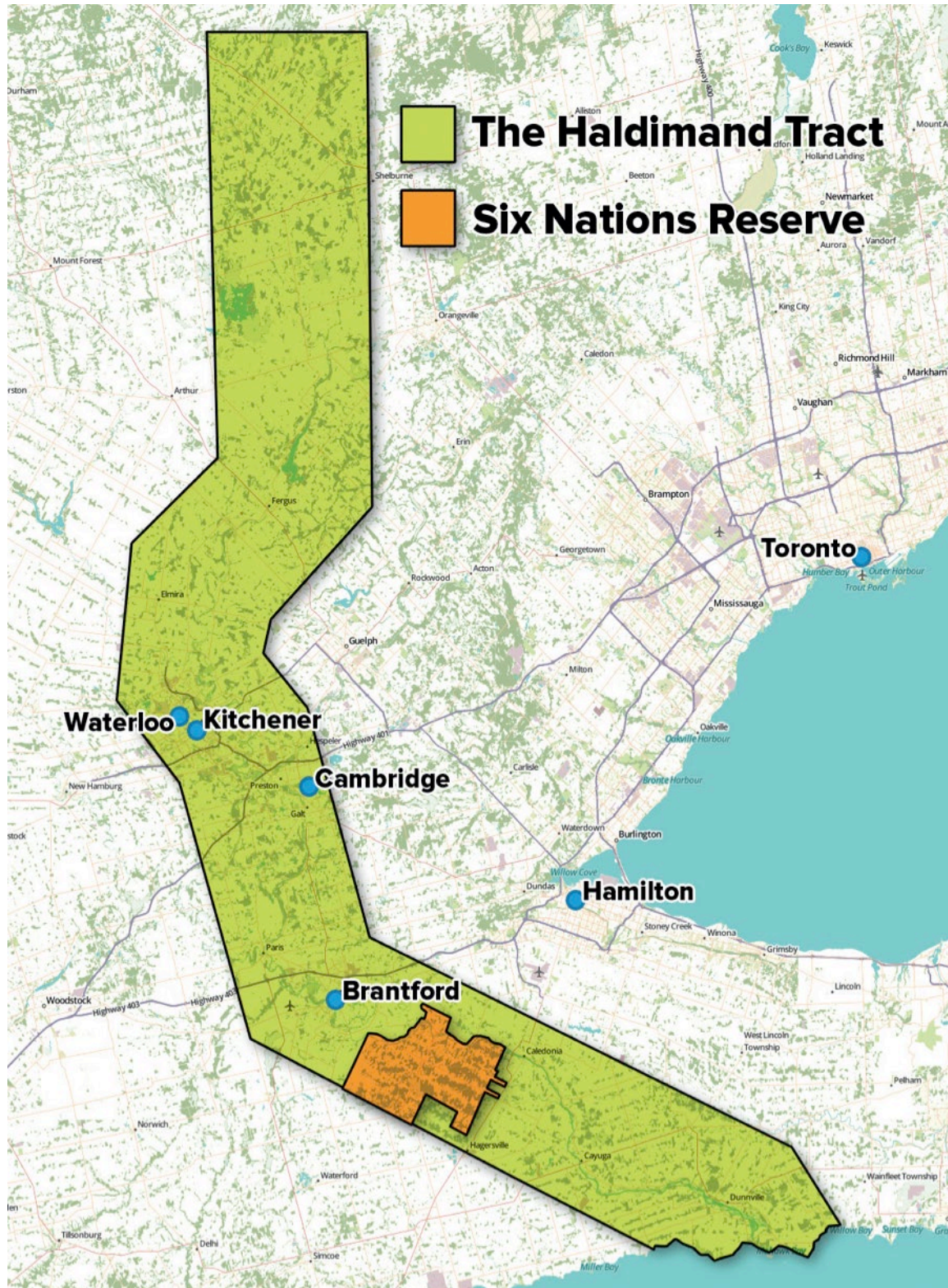
In this paper, we argue that it is not necessary to understand different worldviews entirely for meaningful collaboration, but maintaining mutual respect, trust, and reciprocity with “partial connection” (de la Cadena, 2015) is sufficient to work across knowledge and worldviews. There is no need to diminish any worldviews to create a common ground across epistemologies. We document how community-based participatory research (CBPR) and Indigenous research methods (IRMs), such as storytelling, helped us find a common ground while following the lead of the SNBC. Our research is innovative for several reasons: the research project was led and directed by the Haudenosaunee women; it followed IK pedagogy, and it was not confined to traditional anthropological methods of data collection (lone anthropologist in the field). Instead, research design, development and implementation were collectively

undertaken, and both Haudenosaunee and anthropological knowledge were utilized throughout, from research design to data analysis.

### **SN community/Haudenosaunee: A Brief Introduction Through Teachings**

Located in proximity to Toronto, Hamilton, and Brantford, Six Nations of the Grand River is the most populous and the second-largest Indigenous reserve in Canada. People living at Six Nations are known as Haudenosaunee, meaning "the People of the Long House" or "we build the house." The Haudenosaunee consist of six nations: Onondaga, Cayuga, Mohawk, Seneca, Oneida, and Tuscarora, who formed allyship under the Great Law of Peace, ending war among those nations and establishing peace by burying their weapons under the Tree of Peace. The Dish with One Spoon treaty stopped bloodshed over shared hunting grounds and taught that it is essential to take only what is needed while respecting others—the dish symbolizing the hunting ground and the spoon symbolizing the absence of weapons. The Haudenosaunee Creation Story depicts the birth of *Anowarakowa Kawennote* or Great Turtle Island (North America) and teaches being respectful and working together with non-human beings such as turtles and beavers, geese, earth, and water to continue and promote the flourishing of life on Earth (Hill, 2017). Although the Indian Act and residential schools destroyed the Haudenosaunee matrilineal society and ways of life, the Haudenosaunee have shown robust resilience by maintaining their knowledge and relationship with the land. This is not to romanticize nor to say that there is no division or conflict among members of the Six Nations of the Grand River. It is a diverse community where divisions exist; yet, despite divisions, the people have held onto core values as Haudenosaunee through traditional teachings and laws, traditions that are linked to the past but woven into the future (McCarthy, 2016).





**Figure 1: The Haldimand Tract and Six Nations reserve, used with permission from the Decolonial Atlas under Decolonial Media Licence 0.1.**

## ***Kaswenta* as a Guidance for Collaborative Research**

*Kaswenta* or *Gaswentha* is also known as Tekani teyothata'tye *Kaswenta* (Two-Row Wampum belt) (Goodchild et al., 2021, p. 81). The *Kaswenta* was first established between Haudenosaunee and the Dutch colonizers around 1613. The *Kaswenta* symbolizes *onake* (canoe) and *honwey* (boat) in the water (Hill, 2013). The Two-Row Wampum is made of two rows of purple and three rows of white wampum beads (Goodchild et al., 2020; Parmenter, 2013). The two purple rows symbolize two vessels: the European's ship and the Haudenosaunee birch bark Canoe, moving in parallel with their own customs, laws, and ways of life. The three white rows symbolize the river of life where two vessels of autonomous sovereignty travel without interfering with the internal laws of the other's vessel nor steering the vessel. The three rows of white beads symbolize "the *ne'skennen* (peace), *karihwí:iyo* (good word or way), and *ka'satsténshsera* (unified, empowered minds)" (Coleman, 2019, p. 65, cited in Goodchild et al., 2021, p. 82). The three principles of *Kaswenta*: the Kianierenko:wa is *Sgēnō* (Peace), *Ga'hasdehsäh* (Strength through Unity), and *Ga'nigoi:yoh* (Good Mind) were later extended to other Nations (Williams et al., 2020). The *Kaswenta* implies mutual respect, autonomous sovereignty, and power; it rejects controlling others and interfering with others' ways of life. However, at a time of mutual benefit, it promises to work together for meaningful and sustainable solutions and to help each other in times of necessity, like brothers. We do not intend to reduce the value and sacredness of the *Kaswenta* treaty into simple research guidelines but rather to highlight the effectiveness of its teachings in making common ground across epistemologies.

While non-Indigenous and non-Haudenosaunee researchers should be cautious about approaching *Kaswenta* so as not to reduce its significance or misrepresent it, Indigenous scholars have demonstrated that principles of *the Kaswenta* treaty could be extended to collaborative research as these principles provide respectful dialogical space or "ethical space" (Ermine et al., 2005; Goodchild et al., 2021). Unequal research relationships contribute to Indigenous peoples' marginalization, dehumanization, and epistemic violence (Williams et al., 2020). Williams et al. (2020) argue that Indigenous research sovereignty is crucial to reducing this inequality and violence in research and that the Two-Row Wampum is helpful to implementing equal relations in research. Williams et al. (2020) find the Two-Row model especially applicable, as it includes all creations, animate and inanimate, in its relational accountability. Ransom and Ettenger (2001) describe the Two-Row Wampum as providing powerful guidelines to collaborate respectfully without subsuming one knowledge by another and upholding Indigenous sovereignty in research. McGregor (2008) used the Two-Row Wampum principles as an example of traditional ecological knowledge and Western scientific knowledge coming together to solve climate change issues sustainably. Martin-Hill et al. (2022) highlight the pluralism in *Kaswenta*, as it preserves plural ways of being within peaceful co-existence. They argue that in an interdisciplinary project where Western and Indigenous methodologies come together, *Kaswenta* helps create a strong relationship and "respect [for] diverse approaches to research" (Martin-Hill et al., 2022).

Non-Indigenous researchers trained in Western academic knowledge also find the principles of *Kaswenta* helpful in their research across Western and Indigenous methodologies. For example, Duignan et al. (2020) conducted their health survey with *Kaswenta* principles to work across critical medical anthropology and Haudenosaunee Knowledge. Similarly, Latulippe (2015) was inspired by the



Two-Row Wampum principles to work respectfully across Western and Indigenous knowledge. Latulippe (2015) argues that the Two-Row Wampum treaty facilitates ethical engagement, ensures relational accountability, and respects different epistemologies (Latulippe, 2015, p.9). As utilizing Two-Row Wampum principles in collaborative research is increasing, non-Haudenosaunee researchers need to be careful when working with the *Kaswenta* as it is a sacred law for Haudenosaunee. In an attempt to learn from the *Kaswenta*, one should not reduce this Haudenosaunee law into academic research guidelines or methodology. In this paper, we aim to demonstrate how the *Kaswenta* principles worked as an inspirational backdrop in collaboration with Haudenosaunee and critical medical anthropological knowledge. We take the core teachings of *Kaswenta* to guide us to non-extractive, respectful, and ethical research.

### **Working Across Haudenosaunee and Anthropological Knowledge**

Traditional anthropological understanding of “field” and fieldwork was problematized by Gupta and Ferguson (1997). They argued that in a politically and economically connected world, the traditional understanding of entering in and out of the field or separating the field is not viable. For “in an interconnected world, we are never really out of the field” (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997, p.35). Instead of fieldwork in the traditional sense, Gupta and Ferguson (1997) proposed a connection between different knowledges through shared purpose and alliance. They argued that the field is not a site of data collection but a site for strategic intervention (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997, p.39). Instead of the term fieldwork, they proposed “location work.” Location work is not confining someone in their identity, as Gupta and Ferguson (1997) demonstrate, but it is more like an epistemological or political agenda. It is an ongoing project connected to one’s political practice and interest in a larger project. In our case, there was no lone anthropologist collecting data in a remote field. Our research was collaborative, with active community participation. Although I never lived at Six Nations, I remained engaged with the community. Through newspapers, social media, phone calls and virtual meetings, I was connected to the community. I visited the community several times, attended GWF project meetings, took part in a pow-wow where we promoted our project at GWF table, and assisted with the community medicine garden in pre-pandemic time. However, everything went virtual amid the COVID-19 pandemic, right at the time that I began research. Thus, I was a virtual anthropologist in its literal meaning, a term Kath Weston (1997) used to describe an insider anthropologist or anthropologist who did not do “real” fieldwork, in the traditional anthropological sense. We tried to work across anthropology and Haudenosaunee knowledge with a shared political interest in water security and health equity. Thus, our work aligns more with the location work conceptualized by Gupta and Ferguson (1997).

Several Indigenous scholars and anthropologists proposed creating a common ground of dialogue with common political interests (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997; Ingold, 2017; Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012). There is a growing interest across disciplines to go beyond binaries or conceptual limitations and construct new mutual forms of research, knowledge, and action by collaborating with different partners (Hastrup, 2014; Kovach, 2009). The most popular way of working across epistemologies has been at the margins, borders, or boundaries, not the center. For example, sociologist Stephen Lyng (2005) developed the term “edgework” to describe emotional intensities and going out of one’s comfort zone with skill and

control. Anthropologists later adopted the concept for both environmental and medical anthropology. For example, environmental anthropologist Hastrup (2014) defined *edgework* as working beyond institutional and conceptual boundaries to better understand human-nature relationships. Similarly, Moyer and Nguyen (2017) adopted edgework in medical anthropology to describe work between disciplinary, theoretical, and epistemological boundaries. But, how one can work across epistemologies? Sociologist Susan Leigh Star (1989) proposed the concept of boundary objects to work across epistemologies. A boundary object, as Leigh and Griesemer (1989) elaborate, provides “interpretive flexibility,” allowing different parties to work together without the need to reach any consensus. However, the concept of boundary objects remains vague, so much so that twenty-two years after their original publication, Star (2010) needed to explain what should not be considered as a boundary object. In their latest article about boundary objects, Star explains that boundary means a shared space, and an object means something to act with, and that consideration of scale and scope are also essential to understand boundary objects (Star, 2010). Duignan et al. (2020), although not engaging in the debate about defining boundary objects, claim that their co-created survey to construct health knowledge with Six Nations worked as a boundary object by providing guidance and facilitating dialogues between Indigenous knowledge and medical anthropology.

In our research, I was more interested in working at the edges or boundaries of epistemologies to create a dialogical space with common political interests. de la Cadena’s concept of *partial connections* and Haudenosaunee *Kaswenta* are particularly helpful in understanding and making common ground between different epistemic ontologies or worldviews. de la Cadena (2015) argues that there is no need to disqualify something simply because it cannot be understood in our own epistemic-ontological terms; heterogeneity and differences can still be understood through “partial connections” (de la Cadena, 2014, p.24). All we need is to be partially connected with them where gaps in understanding are obvious and shared (de la Cadena, 2015). They emphasize making those differences and gaps in understanding visible, enabling one to see beyond the limits, outside of one’s own epistemic ontology. According to Ermine (2007), these partial connections take place in “ethical space.” Ethical space is defined as a space that is created when two disparate worldviews or epistemologies engage with each other and create a framework of dialogue (Ermine, 2007). “The space offers a venue to step out of our allegiances, to detach from the cages of our mental worlds and assume a position where human-to-human dialogue can occur” (Ermine, 2007, p. 202). Longboat indicates that in Haudenosaunee worldviews, this ethical space is also a sacred space (Goodchild et al., 2021, p. 84). Taking examples from the Two-Row Wampum, he further illustrates that the three rows of white beads on the *Kaswenta* are sacred spaces that enact the principles of peace, friendship, and respect (Goodchild et al., 2021).

de la Cadena’s (2015) partial connection between epistemologies resonates with the *Kaswenta* or the Two-Row Wampum. Two-Row Wampum teaches that research between different epistemological groups should create a respectful dialogical space, promote equality, accept heterogeneity, and share the knowledge acquired (Hill & Coleman, 2019). *Kaswenta* or Two-Row Wampum also depicted a gap in understanding while working across epistemologies and knowledge:

You sail your own boat and we’ll paddle our own canoe Side by Side ... the pail [pale] face man said to the red [red] face [face] I don’t understand the way of your canoe rules [rules]. The Six

Nations chief said I don't understand the ways of your boat rules (National Archive of Canada, RG 10 vol. 1862 F. 239, as cited in Hill & Coleman, 2019, p.343, original corrections).

The above excerpt highlights a noticeable gap in understanding while creating a dialogical space between Haudenosaunee and European epistemologies. It tells us that gaps will always exist, but that does not mean they need to be reduced; instead, differences should be highlighted to work across epistemologies (de la Cadena, 2014). The Two-Row Wampum also teaches equal relationships:

The white man then asked, "what term of relationship will we go by? I will call you my "child." However, the Ongwehowe replied, "This is not proper, for a father can control the child. What do you think if we addressed each other as "brothers? (Cited in Hill & Coleman, 2019, p.349).

Thus, control and power relations were rejected, and an equal relationship was proposed for creating a common ground. A parent can control and exercise power over the child, but brothers have relatively equal power. Two-Row Wampum also rejected imposing one's culture, beliefs, and laws on others and thus reducing them as one (Hill & Coleman, 2019, p. 351).

### **Tsi Non:we Ionnakeratstha Ona:Grastha: An Example of Working Across Epistemologies**

*Tsi Non:we Ionnakeratstha Ona:grahsta* (the place they will be born) or the SNBC was established on May 17, 1996, to bring birthing care back into the community of the Six Nations of the Grand River, reducing the need for Indigenous mothers to place themselves and their babies at risk in western hospitals. Since then, they have been using both Haudenosaunee and Western medical models but have kept Haudenosaunee medicine at the center. SNBC is not just a regular birth center; it is a place where *they* will be born. These "they" are the future generations coming to the world to do "important jobs" as Haudenosaunee and bring hope to the community. SNBC is a place of self-determination, resistance, and accommodation. In Ontario, SNBC was the first birthing center in an Indigenous community, partially funded by the Government of Ontario, and operating under the exemption of the Midwifery Act (National Aboriginal Council of Midwives [NACM], 2016). The SNBC has four midwives trained in both Haudenosaunee and western medical models, one lactation consultant, one maternity care worker, a house mother, a clinical manager who is also an Indigenous midwife, and a secretary/receptionist. In addition, SNBC has a very knowledgeable Traditional Medicine woman who collects medicines from the land and customizes them as per the particular needs of clients. SNBC trains new midwives and runs many programmes such as healthy baby programmes and prenatal classes. Since their establishment, more than two thousand babies have been born at the center.

Birthplaces in Indigenous communities are also a political landscape (Olson, 2003). Midwifery was outlawed in Canada in 1895 and was replaced with Western medicine, increasing the number of hospital births and demolishing traditional teachings related to pregnancy and births (Born, 2003; NAHO, 2004; Perry, 2019). Indian Act and residential schools also destroyed traditional practices and knowledge, especially those transferred orally from generation to generation. This resulted in the loss of culturally appropriate maternal and birth care and negatively impacted the health of mothers, babies, and the community (Born, 2003; Perry, 2019). Indigenous women's voices are silenced and ignored in western medical settings (Leason, 2018). SNBC gives that voice back to the women. It resists assimilations,

reclaims self-determination by reclaiming births, decolonizes medicines, fights for basic human rights and health equity. SNBC is a political landscape because it reclaims sovereignty, revives, and continues the traditional teachings and medicines of the Haudenosaunee people.

Colonialism and systematic racism demolished Indigenous midwifery practices, making accessing health care difficult for Indigenous mothers. Indigenous mothers often must give birth outside of their community in a setting with language barriers, where they experience racism and discrimination and adverse birth and health outcomes. Studies report a high infant mortality rate, twice that of non-Indigenous populations, and higher postpartum depression among Indigenous women (Balkissoon, 2018; Stout & Harp, 2009). SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) is five to seven times higher in Indigenous communities than non-Indigenous populations (Hunt & Hauck, 2006; Mann, 2018; Wilson, 1999). Lack of prenatal care, remote locations, lack of health funding, and insufficient Indigenous health professionals are some reasons for these adverse health outcomes (Smiley et al., 2021). Indigenous midwives brought births back to the communities to improve health and well-being for mothers, babies, and families, regenerate Indigenous knowledge and practices, and reclaim self-determination. Studies have demonstrated significant improvement in health outcomes with Indigenous midwives in the community (Smiley et al., 2014). In addition to providing services during pregnancy, pre-, and postnatal periods, Indigenous midwives de-medicalize births, provide cultural safety, increase family and cultural bonding, play critical roles in building safe communities, restore traditional ways, and reduce medical evacuation or flying out of the community to give birth (National Aboriginal Council of Midwives [NACM], 2020).

SNBC is a perfect example of working across epistemologies as they have been successfully utilizing western medicine in Haudenosaunee medicine for the last 25 years. Some scholars who studied contemporary Indigenous midwifery practices analyzed this coexistence of two medical models as "blending" or "merging" of different medical models of birthing care (e.g., Carroll & Benoit, 2004; Perry, 2019.). However, the words "blending", and "merging" are problematic because they are reductionist and promote the idea of assimilation. At SNBC, western and Haudenosaunee medical models do not merge or blend but peacefully co-exist, reflecting the Haudenosaunee Two-Row Wampum, a treaty of peaceful coexistence, with a promise of helping each other at times of need. Therefore, the western medical model is only sought at times of need, such as, for example, when mothers need to transfer to the hospital, start an IV, or emergency delivery of the placenta. Otherwise, traditional medicine and traditional practices remain at the center of their services. SNBC is distinct from the Western medical model in many ways. For example, while Western birthing positions are mostly semi-recumbent, they are primarily upright in the Haudenosaunee model. In addition, there is no limit to the number of support people mothers can have in the Haudenosaunee model versus very tight Western restrictions on the number of support people. The Haudenosaunee system gives power to mothers rather than expecting them to defer to doctors. Thus, a sharp difference from the western medical model is noticeable in their practices that would not be possible if there were a blending or merging of these two models. Instead, it is more like working at the edges so that two systems can come together to enhance mothers' and babies' health. "A relationship of respect" is what is needed, according to Julie, when working with different epistemologies.

## **Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) and Indigenous Research Methods (IRMs): Finding a Common Ground**

Mainstream research has been used as a weapon of colonialism to exercise power and create the Other (Said, 1978; Williams et al., 2020), contributing to western disciplining of Indigenous communities through exclusion, assimilation, marginalization, and denial. With some rare exceptions, mainstream research has mainly represented Indigenous peoples as primitive, reluctant to change, lacking intellect, and thus justified ripping them from their identities, forcibly assimilating them, even exterminating them (McCarthy, 2016; Smith, 2012; Stevenson, 2018). Throughout western colonial history academic and institutional research has been top-down, decided by the researcher, with Indigenous communities having no access to data or results (Galtung, 1975; Smith, 2012). Anthropology is no exception and has a history of reproducing and reinforcing structural violence by keeping colonialism alive through research, theory, and methods (Clair, 2003; Davis, 2009; McCarthy, 2016; Todd, 2016). Despite this traumatic experience with academic research, many Indigenous scholars and anthropologists, along with those in other similar disciplines, believe creating a common dialogical space is essential for sustainable solutions and achieving common political goals such as health equity and water justice. Smith (2012) and Kovach (2009) argue that insiders' experience is vital, but assuming that is all they require for research is arrogant. Similarly, Ingold (2017), an anthropologist, argues that no one single group, specialist scientist, Indigenous group or philosophy holds the key to the future; instead, dialogues between those groups will make the future, and anthropology can expand the scope of that dialogue (Ingold, 2017:22).

Collaboration with Indigenous communities that includes Indigenous worldviews and voices has been considered a fruitful way of working across epistemologies (Smith, 2012; Kovach, 2009). Kovach (2009) thought Participatory Action Research (PAR) or Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR) could be good models for collaboration with Indigenous communities. Some of the reasons are: PAR and CBPR deviate from positivist research paradigms, seek active community participation, and have decolonizing or anti-colonial agendas (Battiste & Henderson 2000; Castleden et al., 2012; Dawson et al., 2017; Kovach, 2015), recognize that the researcher is not a neutral instrument of the research process (Kovach, 2009, p.32), emancipatory in nature, and aim to give back to the communities (Morton Ninomiya & Pollock, 2017; Ritchie et al. 2013). Although participatory research or action research has proven to be beneficial to the marginalized due to community involvement in the research, the level of involvement in most cases has been tokenistic (Easby & Brown, 2016), with little to no discussion about the degree of community participation (Armstrong et al., 2011). Moreover, most research with Indigenous communities has neglected to articulate Indigenous research paradigms (Wilson, 2001).

While Indigenous research methods (IRMs) are too diverse to define (Steinhauer, 2002), it is possible to extract some central themes: Indigenous research methods put Indigenous worldviews at the center, respect the natural world, are relational in data collection, and have decolonizing objectives (Wilson, 2008; Kovach, 2009; Kurtz, 2013; Dawson et al., 2017). IRMs derive from Indigenous Knowledge that emphasises the interconnectedness and interdependency of all creations. That knowledge is shared, not individualistic, and accumulated through relations with land (Battiste & Henderson 2000; Williams et

al., 2020). Knowledge is gathered from multiple sources such as "traditional teachings, empirical observations, and revelations" (Castellano, 2000, p. 23). In addition to being anti-colonial, anti-positivist, and anti-objectivist, Indigenous research methodology is relational—that relationship goes beyond human relationships and includes all living beings and creations (Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Kovach, 2009).

On the other hand, CBPR is collaborative where community works as an active and full collaborator, and where academicians and other scientists work as co-partners and learners (Holkup et al., 2004; Pontes & Gendron, 2011). It aims to improve the lives of marginalized groups by taking actions against oppressions, addressing injustice and inequities, and focusing on community needs (Holkup et al., 2004; Pontes & Gendron, 2011). CBPR is fluid and open to the unpredictability of the research process (Armstrong et al., 2011). It is beneficial for academicians, researchers, and the community (Holkup et al., 2004; Hopkins et al., 2019). However, one problem with CBPR is that it claims to be the perfect method of researching with Indigenous communities and does not emphasize adopting Indigenous research methods when they fit (Armstrong et al., 2011; Coachran et al., 2008). Simond & Cristopher (2013) also point to the need for CBPR to adopt Indigenous methods and worldviews and acknowledge Indigenous sovereignty. Theoretically, since CBPR is flexible and seeks full community involvement at every research stage, Indigenous scholars find it appropriate to use CBPR in research with Indigenous communities given that other appropriate IRMs are used (Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Both CBPR and IRMs are flexible and adaptive. They advocate for active community participation, reject objectivity, challenge positivist research, and are emancipatory. As such, in this collaborative research, IRMs or Haudenosaunee knowledge and methods and CBPR create a common and respectful ground of dialogue to facilitate the co-creation of knowledge about maternal health and water insecurity. In our research, there was active community participation, differences and biases were highlighted with clear positionality. It was adaptive and flexible enough to adapt to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic situations. Most importantly, the research was not top-down. Instead, it progressed following the SNBC lead.

### **Building Relationships of Trust**

Building relationships in research with mutual respect and truthfulness is of utmost importance in IRMs. It is also important in CBPR to encourage active participation of the community involved. I entered the Six Nations Community based on the long-term relationship established by Dawn as a member of the Six Nations, researcher, and scholar. Further, our research stands on the long-term trustful and respectful relationship created and maintained by SNBC with their clients since 1996.

The first time I walked into the Six Nations Birthing Center was in Fall 2018 when Dawn held a meeting to decide future directions for the *Ohneganos* project with consultations of the SN community partners. There I met some of the SNBC members and midwives, including the director, Julie Wilson. Dawn introduced me as a potential candidate to collaborate with the SNBC and review MW charts to assess the impact of water insecurity on SN mothers and children. Julie and I met several times after for talking about the research, its purpose, questions, and benefits. I remember mentioning the importance of this research as part of my Ph.D. requirement as well. When it was evident that I could not be the one interviewing the participants due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in the province and the SN



community, Julie came up with the idea of someone from the community to be conducting phone interviews for me. A few days later, she emailed me about Janet Homer, who has been working at the SNBC since its establishment and has built respectful and trustful relationships with the clients of the SNBC through her programs like Mom and Tots. She supports mothers, provides postnatal care, helps them make traditional medicine, does home visits whenever someone needs an extra hand to cope with new babies or multiple children or needs a short break. Therefore, when Janet interviewed the participants over the phone, the established trust was there.

Janet and I were e-introduced over email, and then we decided on a time to chat over the phone and go over the research, its plans, and how she was going to help. Janet and I met in person briefly for the first time when I handed her the questionnaire, invitation brochures, and consent forms along with a notebook so she could write notes about the interviews. Janet and I live in the same neighbourhood, so we often met briefly with masks still on our faces and exchanged thoughts and shared experiences. We talked about technical issues Janet faced, such as being disconnected with participants over the phone and how to manage the situation better. Janet and I also regularly met to collect interviews from the audio-recorder and to upload them onto my personal computer to make room for her subsequent interviews. After about ten interviews were collected, I listened to them and provided Janet with further suggestions to include in interviews, such as asking probing questions as she felt relevant. I also met regularly with her to provide her with the Walmart gift cards for the participants. We communicated via emails, text, phone calls, and in-person meetings.

We decided to make a Digital Story (DS) about the SNBC to record practices, services, and relationships with their clients. I was invited to revisit the SNBC on May 17, 2021, on its birthday! I had opportunities to meet the house mothers, other midwives and staff while making the DS. I learned so much more about the facility on that day. Julie and I chatted over the phone, communicated over email, and met in person in pre-pandemic time and one time during the pandemic while making the DS. We talked about the research and its progress, and she always asked me about my progress with PhD. I was comfortable sharing my vulnerabilities with her as a graduate student and a mother of a little daughter. “Just hang in there Afroza, you have got this” or “tell me what you need” or “will this be helpful for your research then I will do it, if not I will pass just for time’s sake” often were the most encouraging and supporting words I would hear. She would find time for me even when she was attending births. To my hesitation to talk to her at a birth, she would assure me saying, “oh no worries, the mother is resting now so I have few minutes to talk to you.”

Julie encouraged me when I was worried that the clients of the Six Nations Birthing Center might not want to talk to me since they did not know me! My doubts came from talking to colleagues and reading literature that shared their experiences of difficulty getting access to participants in Indigenous communities due to previous history of exploitative and extractive research (Castleden et al., 2012). Literature showed that one of the requirements of researching with Indigenous communities is to build a long-term, trustful relationship. Trust is an ongoing process; it is not built in a day and it takes a lifetime to uphold that trust, but we believe we have established a foundation and now need to maintain and continue that relationship of trust.

## Co-designing Research Led by the SNBC

Research with Indigenous communities needs to be relevant to the community. The SNBC actively participated in the research by co-designing and leading the research. The SNBC identified the need to assess the impact of water insecurity on young SN mothers. Julie and I met several times in person at the SNBC at Six Nations of the Grand River and at McMaster university and conversed over the phone to co-design the research. It prevented research from being top-down and encouraged active community participation. While the preliminary plan was to review midwives' charts to assess water insecurity, my proposal of in-person interviews with the clients was accepted and incorporated. We then interviewed the SNBC clients, midwives, and consultant grandmothers. The questionnaire for the research was also co-designed and so was the invitation brochure. Co-designing the questionnaire helped me choose words that are easy to understand for the general community and respectful. We avoided questions that might trigger trauma, and midwives' expertise and experience helped ensure that. We reorganized our questions with the midwives' suggestions to inspire the flow of conversations and asked questions about water usage and practices and their impact on holistic maternal health. Our interview guidelines included questions about stories, where participants were encouraged to share their stories about their experiences with water in the community. Midwives drew relevant data from their charts. Moreover, the supervisor midwife, Julie, directed the research by joining my Ph.D. committee meetings at McMaster university to monitor progress and provide necessary guidance. This level of community leadership in the academic sphere is rare within western post-secondary education and represents a small step toward decolonizing academia (Smith, 2012; Zaval, 2013). Thus, the research followed a decolonizing approach and progressed with community leadership and control.

## COVID-19 and Flexibility in Research

As mentioned above, adaptability and flexibility are characteristics of both IRMs and CBPR and therefore they worked well in changing situations of COVID-19 pandemic. The first case of COVID-19 was detected in Ontario in January 2020, and the province-wide lockdown was ordered as an attempt to reduce the spread and flatten the curve. Six Nations of the Grand River also was closed for non-members. It was also the time we were waiting to obtain our final ethics clearance from the Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board (HiREB) and Six Nations Ethics Council (SNEC) before we started the research by interviewing the SN Birthing Center clients. Foreseeing the COVID-19 situation, an alternative was sought. Phone interviews were decided on instead of the original in-person interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with grandparents and midwives were cancelled, prioritizing both clients' health and safety and the research team. The SNBC offered support by recruiting their Maternity Care researcher, *Yekarò:roks* (She gathers stories), Janet Homer, to conduct phone interviews for the research. They spoke openly and spoke their mind. "*Some of them were emotional during interviews, and I feel honoured that they showed their emotion to me*" —Janet told me in one of our regular touch-base conversations.

Anthropologists conducting interviews with the help of others is not new in the discipline, although they have been marginalized in the discipline as not "real anthropologists" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). For example, in 1935, Paul Radin used local insurance salespersons and real estate agents to collect data rather than being one lone anthropologist. He argued, as Gupta and Ferguson (1997) explain, that local

unemployed researchers are much better qualified to interview working-class people than university degree holders (Radin, 1935, cited in Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). Providing the example of Radin's ethnography, Gupta and Ferguson (1997) argue that believing only university-trained and degree holders are always better is problematic; rather, local intellectuals and stakeholders can be better positioned to collect certain sorts of data. For, "inexperienced and often socially awkward . . . graduate students are not necessarily the best of all possible observers [or interviewers/researchers]" (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997, p.24). Janet was undoubtedly a much better fit for conducting interviews as building a relationship of trust is essential for interviews to be meaningful, especially when the pandemic demanded mostly phone interviews.

In addition to the interviews, our initial plan to collect data by reviewing midwives' charts also changed as COVID-19 continued to worsen in Canada. Instead of handing the charts over to me, midwives went through their notes and collected information related to co-developed questions about water insecurity. Despite their full-time midwifery job, they offered support and decided on the best way to collect data from their notes. Although we planned to have the midwives read aloud the data from the charts so I could transcribe them later, the midwives decided to put them in word files as the best way of recording the data. *"I do not know how I came up with this idea, but I wanted that it is easy to understand for someone outside [of the Birthing Center],"* shared Asley Lickers, a midwife, as she talked about her decisions of moving from audio recording the data to charts in a word file. This action is significant as it reveals several important points: 1) The SN Birthing Center owned the research by deciding ways of data collection, and 2) the researchers-participants binary dissolved as they were very active in the research process and made decisions. I then quantified the data pulled from midwives' charts. Looking back to the features of CBPR, active participation by all involved is reflected in the research, as everyone served as co-researchers in terms of collecting data and providing directions and guidance. In our research, typical researcher-community or researcher-participants hierarchical binary dualism was minimal. Further, to cope with the new situation of COVID-19, the research was flexible enough to incorporate new directions and changes. This process shows the community's strength and capacity to adjust to unprecedented situations and lead the research path.

### **Storytelling as a Method**

We incorporated storytelling as a means of data collection in semi-structured interviews. We asked for participants' stories related to water in the households and community. We retell and analyze the stories of the participants by highlighting their voices, by retelling the stories in the participants' own words. Indigenous scholars have emphasized the incorporation of stories in the research with Indigenous communities (Smith, 2012; Archibald, 2019; Kovach, 2015) as stories are inseparable from Indigenous or Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). Stories have an important place in Haudenosaunee knowledge and philosophy. Knowledge is transferred orally through stories. Therefore, incorporating stories in research design with Indigenous communities is crucial. Kovach (2009; 2010; 2015) highlights the importance of stories, dreams, and visions in Indigenous methodologies passed orally from one generation to another. Recently, storytelling has been used as a data collection method in research with Indigenous communities across disciplines. Bringing stories into academia as a method has been a way of decolonizing methodologies, a term used by Smith (2012). Inspired by Smith, Archibald (2019)

emphasizes incorporating stories as a method for Indigenous research since stories assert space in colonial settings and conventions.

The use of stories for Indigenous communities is an act of resistance to colonial power and frameworks for reclaiming Indigenous sovereignty (Frank, 2017, p.3). Stories are embedded in Indigenous ways of life, work as guidance, connect the past with the present, and provide directions (Archibald, 2008; Frank 2017). Indigenous stories not only include geography, land, people, and kinship; they also include spiritual realms, visions, dreams, and miracles. Further, stories are therapeutic and emancipatory (Frank, 2000; Anderson & Mack, 2019). They reduce depression and anxiety, strengthen social connections and support, strengthen a sense of community, and work as a medium of forgiveness (Frank, 2017). Archibald (2008) coined the term "story work" and described its seven principles: respect, responsibility, reverence, reciprocity, holism, interrelatedness, and synergy. She argues that stories have different categories, such as sacred stories, historical stories, and life experience stories. Sacred stories are not easily unfolded; it takes time and a different level of understanding. Listeners may not understand stories all at once; stories unfold themselves (Archibald, 2008, p.112-114).

Stories for Haudenosaunee connect the past and guide the future, much like how McCarthy (2016) defined Haudenosaunee traditions. Stories are essential against silencing; they are an excellent form of resistance. They do not only work as meaning making of our surroundings; they work for changing it. Stories are not myths or beliefs—stories are identities, explanations of the world, and nature. It is essential to become accountable in retelling any story. Archibald (2008) argued that stories need to be understood in relationships that encompass family, community, nations, and nature and environment. Linking this idea with the critical medical anthropology (CMA) approach (Singer, 1989), we argue that stories should also be understood in relation to larger historical and global political-economic structures.

**Maintaining OCAP and 4Rs:** IRMs highlights ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP) of the research data, therefore it was crucial for us to be clear about data OCAP with the SN community and the SNBC. "Nothing about us without us" is a slogan popular for research with Indigenous and marginalized communities emphasizing the need for community involvement and access to the research. The Tri-council ethical guidelines and the Royal Commission of Aboriginal People (RCAP) state that the data's ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP) will be by the Indigenous communities. Visiting the community and having a conversation about ownership, use and purpose of the research at the beginning is essential in research with the Indigenous communities (Kovach, 2009; Simons & Christopher, 2013). We followed OCAP, where Six Nations Birthing Center and Six Nations own the research. For our research, the data ownership by SNBC or Six Nations Health Services (SNHS) was made clear to the community before the research began. We also indicated this ownership agreement in our ethics application to Hamilton Integrated Research Ethics Board (HiREB) and the Six Nations Research Ethics Council (SNREC). As soon as the transcriptions were done, the anonymous interview data was shared with SN Birthing Center through a secured McMaster storage called MacDrive. The McMaster University email ID, known as Mac ID, was also created for the Birthing Center, so they have immediate full access and control over the data.

In addition, RCAP also states that respect, relevance, relationality, and reciprocity, otherwise known as the 4Rs, should be maintained. Kovach (2009) warns that the idea of respect should not be assumed but

should be established on mutual understanding of respect. Steinhauer (2002, p.73) elaborates that respect means listening attentively and then acting accordingly by involving the community. Smith (2012) demonstrated that for Indigenous communities, respect goes beyond humans and includes the environment, nature, and land. In our research, we carefully maintained the 4Rs. For instance, our research maintains respect by listening and incorporating community advice and following their lead and guidance to carry on the research mentioned in the COVID-19 response discussion. Moreover, the research has progressed by being respectful and humble, listening actively, and acting accordingly. We were respectful of the knowledge, time and stories shared with us. The relevance of the research was maintained by following the SNBC lead. The community's lead was followed in adopting and designing research methods, co-analyzing themes, and co-publishing research papers. The community identified the need for the research, so the research is relevant to the Six Nations community. We were also responsible for maintaining all participants' anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality. As an act of reciprocity, I created a Digital Story (DS) for SNBC, highlighting their knowledge and practices related to pregnancy, childbirth, family, and community care, which might be useful to spread their works beyond the SN community. We are also co-publishing articles that take our collaboration beyond data collection and analysis. Co-analyzing and co-publishing data also help reduce any potential misinterpretation of data.

### **Mutual Benefit and Capacity Building**

Indigenous communities want the researchers to focus on strength away from pathologizing research and extractive research, such as the continued survival of settler colonialism and restoring traditional knowledge and practices (Ball and Janyst, 2008). Research that is mutually beneficial and helps capacity building is welcomed by Indigenous communities. CBPR seeks to give back to the community, and the *Kaswenta* treaty principles also teaches about mutual benefits. As Ball and Janyst (2008) mentioned, research is a journey, and its benefits and specific outcomes are uncertain. Creating knowledge could be beneficial, too, if not making a significant direct contribution to social justice (Ball, 2014). In our research, the participants appeared to have a positive view to contribute knowledge for positive changes related to water in their community and beyond. A small token of gratitude in the form of gift certificate was given to each participant for their time in the research. Further, as outlined by Ball and Janyst (2008), research partnership opens opportunities for learning new skills, exploring and finding the topic of interest, and networking with different organizations and people. Through the partnership, non-Indigenous researchers can learn about Indigenous knowledge and worldviews and themselves (Ball & Janyst, 2008). I learned about new skills and was exposed to Haudenosaunee knowledge and philosophy through this research. Working with the SNBC, Haudenosaunee women, helped me relearn and rediscover myself, which I consider the most significant benefit. I also benefited from the SNBC's in-kind support in the form of conducting interviews and their time guiding the research. In addition to receiving funding from the GWF as a Research Assistant (RA) and a stipend through the *Ohneganos* project, I learned from *Ohneganos* multidisciplinary team members and built networks.

Along with the community, researchers' and academics' capacity building is also essential to conduct ethical research that goes beyond following ethical guidelines (Coachran et al., 2008; Kotaska, 2019). I received training in Indigenous knowledge through my PhD coursework, and I received cultural

orientation on Haudenosaunee worldviews by attending GWF meetings. Working closely with the SNBC helped build my capacity for collaborating on the research. Although no direct capacity was built for the Birthing Center from this research per se, the larger *Ohneganos* research project helped with different capacity building for the community, such as hiring community members as research assistants and training youth in water governance and rights, Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Western science environmental monitoring.

### Researching with a “Good Mind”

CBPR and *Kaswenta* principles facilitated working across anthropological and Haudenosaunee knowledge with "good minds." Having good minds has the utmost importance in the Haudenosaunee philosophy, especially when collaborating. A good mind in research would mean being clear about motives, being transparent with purposes, and having positive intent (Freeman & Van Katwyk, 2019). It also means to listen carefully with compassion and kindness and act accordingly. In our research, we clearly stated our intentions and purposes for this research which were to contribute to water justice and health equity and get a Ph.D. requirement done. The mutual benefit was understood and agreed upon by the SNBC. I was introduced to the SNBC at the Six Nations of the Grand River in 2018. Since then, I have been learning and trying to grapple with Haudenosaunee tradition and knowledge, acknowledging that my understanding is and will remain partial. de la Cadena (2015) suggests understanding unfamiliar worldviews through partial connections by introducing the concept of "equivocation" and arguing that we mean different things even after using the same word. However, we need to strive to make those partial connections stronger and better with truthfulness, trust, and respect. The SNBC did not only help with the research but with the completion of my Ph.D. requirement as we learned that the *Kaswenta* principles encourage them to do so, which is helping each other in need while journeying side by side.

The participants also upheld the good mind by not only contributing to the knowledge creation but reflecting on the research with encouragement. Many participants expressed the necessity of the research that focused on mothers and water. They wanted their voice to be heard, their situations with water to be taken seriously and known to the policymakers and broader people, and to bring equity and justice to water rights to and beyond their community. as one participant stated,

They're [researchers] doing a great job by doing this kind of research, especially in Indigenous communities . . . I think that research can help push a lot of changes and initiatives.

Some participants thought the research would help promote basic rights such as water:

This is like a basic human right that our people have been struggling with. This research is important. And I think that the results will be important to supporting that. The data will be important, but we need to act on these things now because it's an inequity that we shouldn't have.

One grandmother shared her thoughts about the research:



Just continue to do what they're doing, hopefully, maybe not in my generation, but maybe the other generations will benefit from that because working with the government is very slow, its very slow. That's why I say it might not happen in my generation, but hopefully it'll happen in their grandchildren, whatever they find, you know, and whatever they can do to help.

As a researcher and young scholar, as I write, I keep the SN mothers and grandmothers and children in my mind. I remember their knowledge, suggestions, and reflections. I aim to spread their words and stories with my writing and with "good mind." Co-authoring with the community partner is essential to make sure their stories are presented in a good way. It is also crucial to dismantle "repressive authenticity" (McCarthy, 2016, p. 43) and acknowledging ownership of the community.

## Discussion

Indigenous and western knowledge can come together for mutual benefit and goals without dismissing each other. Despite the colonial history of western academic research and methods, many Indigenous scholars are against the total rejection of western knowledge (e.g. Kovach, 2009; Martin-Hill, 2021; Smith, 2012). They have demonstrated the need for western knowledge and Indigenous knowledge to work together for sustainable solutions to ecological problems, including water justice. Indigenous knowledge and methods are crucial, along with community participation in decision-making with western scientific knowledge. Anthropologists also believe that collaboration is a key to better scholarship and a sustainable future (de la Cadena, 2015; Ingold, 2017). Research with Indigenous communities must include Indigenous communities as research partners and ground the work in local knowledge derived from unique relationships with the land. CBPR and IRMs work well together, for they both are flexible, anti-colonial, and reciprocal. Both Haudenosaunee teachings and philosophy and critical medical anthropology helped us to create a common ground with mutual respect and shared responsibilities. We co-created the research design and methods by putting Haudenosaunee knowledge at the center of data collection and analysis. While the involvement of Indigenous communities in most community-based research has been minimal, our research progressed following the SNBC lead from research conception to data collection and analysis.

Haudenosaunee *Kaswenta* treaty is a living example of the peaceful co-existence of different knowledge, worldviews, and cultures. While the settler-colonial state of Canada did not uphold the treaty, Indigenous scholars demonstrated that the *Kaswenta* treaty principles help create dialogical space across knowledge and methods (Goodchild, 2020; Hill & Coleman, 2019; Martin-Hill et al., 2022; McGregor, 2009), as it celebrates heterogeneity, respects differences. *Kaswenta* is helpful to understand how research across epistemology is feasible without being extractive, ignoring, or silencing other knowledge. *Kaswenta* worked as an inspiration in our research to work across Haudenosaunee and medical anthropological knowledge and methods. However, non-Indigenous researchers need to be mindful and respectful so that something as valuable as the law of *Kaswenta* does not get reduced into simple research guidelines. It is important to uphold the teachings of *Kaswenta* beyond the academic integration and work in solidarity with Indigenous communities, so the real purpose of the peaceful co-existence of sovereign nations is upheld and respected.

Our collaboration with the SNBC taught me that when the community takes the lead, we get meaningful and fruitful research outcomes, and any problems that may arise can be resolved suitably. When the purpose and goal of the research align with community needs and dialogue happens with respect and trust, researchers-participants' binary and hierarchical power relations are reduced. In our research, during COVID-19, the SNBC took the lead by finding ways to proceed with the research during the COVID-19 lockdown; midwives collected relevant information from their clients' charts, and members of the midwifery team conducted interviews. As a result, our research progressed efficiently despite the global pandemic. We learned that sometimes, just stepping back and letting the community lead is an efficient way to progress the research. We also learned that community members can be better interviewers especially if the researchers did not have the opportunity to build a solid, trustful relationship with the community. Interviews, conversations, and stories are more meaningful when they are shared with someone who has built a relationship of trust. Janet, the maternity Care worker at SNBC, has built a relationship of trust for over 25 years. Therefore, participants opened their hearts, shared their stories and emotions. Although there was a physical distance in the phone conversation, they connected by maintaining the "sacred space" built through trust, respect, and friendship.

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, we were able to conduct 55 interviews in just four months. The number and the depth and quality of interviews prove that community members can be better fits for conducting interviews than academic degree holders, especially "an awkward grad student" (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). The SNBC involvement in every research step, including co-analyzing key themes and co-publishing data, made the research more meaningful. It reduced the researcher's biases in the analysis and reduced risk of misinterpretation. Involving the community partner in academic settings such as formal Ph.D. committee meetings has been very effective. The community partner assessed the progress and directed the plans and goals. This enriched the whole research and Ph.D. process, and it allowed other two Ph.D. committee members, Dr. Tina Moffat and Dr. Ellen Badone to meet the community partner, learn and know the research situation, and follow their lead. It helped decolonize academic space.

### Conclusion

Contrary to western methods where principal researchers define research questions, design research methods, select participants, document the findings, and then publish the reports, our research was co-designed and co-developed as a part of the *Ohneganos* research project with the SNBC. Designing methods to select participants progressed following the SNBC lead. This paper discussed our ways of co-developing research by working across medical anthropology and Haudenosaunee Knowledge. It describes our partnership with Six Nations of the Grand River, where we applied CBPR and Haudenosaunee methodology in developing our research. Providing a case study of research with the SNBC, we demonstrated how we worked across epistemological boundaries and grounded our methodology in Haudenosaunee worldviews. We demonstrated that Haudenosaunee Knowledge, IRMs, and CBPR are flexible and adaptive, and they fit well together in our research. We argued that tokenistic mention of community participation and 4Rs are problematic and provided a detailed account of how we followed and maintained OCAP and 4Rs with this in mind. Our research was a collaboration with full and active participation from the community. Although full and active community participation

is rewarding, we need to be mindful of the limitations that may accompany academic institutions and funding agencies and not overburden the community with the extra workload for the research. However, all decisions should be informed and guided by the community for meaningful research with Indigenous communities.

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