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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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Review of

Archibald, Jo-Ann, Jenny Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo, eds. 2019. *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*. London: Zed Scholar.

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“Of all the powers in the world, storytelling
is one of the greatest” (113)

Inuit filmmaker Lucy Tulugarjuk recently expressed that “the skills and techniques of the material part of our traditions are still there. The style of delivery may have changed, since we use recordings now; however, our purpose remains the same—to pass on information that is important to and for us” (qtd. in Makkik 2019: 74). In this statement, Tulugarjuk echoes the aspirations of storywork, an essential Indigenous methodology clarified throughout *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork As Methodology*. The collection of essays, edited by Jo-Ann Archibald, Jenny Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo offers numerous examples for researchers interested in integrating storywork into their research practice, including those working within material culture studies.

Jo-Ann Archibald (Q’um Q’um Xiiem) first defined storywork in her foundational text *Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body and Spirit* (2008), as education through stories and storytelling. Although we, as Indigenous peoples across the globe, have always approached research through the framework of storying, Archibald laid the groundwork for its use in university research contexts in ways that extend

beyond the auspices of myth and legend. Rather than simply documenting tales and analyzing narrative structures, Archibald demonstrated that stories can be engaged with and understood from insider perspectives and that this is integral to storywork. In this process, knowledge is learned and generated from an Indigenous perspective. Archibald’s trailblazing contributions to the field of storywork are furthered with the publication of *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology*.

Other books have made valuable contributions to Indigenous story research in the sense that they document stories and oral histories shared by Indigenous people. Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank’s *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (1998) notably serves as a defining text for documenting Indigenous stories while showing that these stories are truthful histories of Indigenous people. It opened the path in Western academia to place more validity in Indigenous knowledge. While Cruikshank’s *The Social Life of Stories* is not a methodology book, the methods employed by the author have long offered researchers direction in using stories in research. While Cruikshank

emphasizes the importance of listening to stories people tell of themselves (1998: xiv-v), *Decolonizing Research* strengthens this work by affirming the research focus of storywork as valuable. Further, *Decolonizing Research* presents methodologies that help resolve colonial attitudes that are still present in academia today.

One strength of *Decolonizing Research* is that it clearly demonstrates the embodiedness of subjective truth embedded in Indigenous academia, a core principle in Indigenous research methodology. As an Inuk researcher who uses material culture in connection with stories of the land as a key part of my research process, I have experienced struggles in reconciling Indigenous and Western research methods within the academy. In my collections-based research, I utilize storywork through listening to elders speak about Inuit material culture, enriching and contextualizing knowledge about museum collections through narrative. *Decolonizing Research* helps researchers understand the potential of storywork to bridge Indigenous and non-Indigenous research perspectives.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith provides the foreword to this book, reinforcing her support for storywork within academia. Smith acknowledges that stories were used to suppress and dominate colonized societies, and that storywork as a decolonizing methodology gives “the right, the space, (and) the voice to ‘tell our own stories from our own perspectives’” (2019: xi). Further, Smith importantly clarifies that storywork is not about telling colonial stories, it is about the doctrines of making stories and storytelling, as well as the cultural understanding of making sense of stories (xi). Without these doctrines we would not do Indigenous stories justice to their original purpose within Indigenous communities.

Decolonizing Research considers the use of storywork in Indigenous research across three geographical areas: Canada, Aotearoa/New Zealand, and Australia. Scholars from each region contribute essays highlighting storywork in their communities. Each contributor lays out contemporary uses of storywork within collaborative settings to create new knowledge. The chapters cover diverse disciplines and fields, including mathematics, film, education, and legal practice. Overall, the geographic and topical breadth of this accessible text, filled with individual and personal

stories that combine theory and practice, offer readers insight into the power of story as method.

In the introduction the editors state that a critical tool of colonization was research, and that “colonial Western research of our traditional stories and research stories of our peoples were used to define, destroy, and deter the valuing of Indigenous knowledge, people, and practices” (5). They remind readers that an important aspect of decolonizing research is to equip our storytellers and communities with a voice to share, listen to, and understand our stories. This allows Indigenous peoples across the globe to collectively become a research community that asserts authority over research and challenges colonial frameworks of research (7-8). In this sense, storywork is a decolonizing methodology.

The reader is not restricted to reading the book in a linear fashion, further emphasizing the Indigenous approach to knowledge, where linearity is not central to stories or to the learning process. The arrangement of chapters from Canada cover ethical practices in research, film aesthetics, Indigenous theory, and mathematics. The section from Aotearoa/New Zealand covers gender, naming, and Māori law. From Australia the topics in this section offer the reader insight into self-determination within institutional settings, decolonizing spaces in academia, and lived experience in grassroots initiatives. Together, the breadth of topics is useful for many readers interested in Indigenous research methodology, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. There are multiple examples of how storywork is meaningful in a wide variety of fields, suggesting the seamlessness in Indigenous knowledge.

The entire book illustrates cross-cultural linkages in which stories are enmeshed. Readers will gain a clearer understanding of storywork across the globe. Each chapter brings the reader a perspective that is unique but, at the same time, is part of the Indigenous voices bound together through stories and storying. As I read, I drew connections threaded throughout the stories. In one notable chapter, “Naming Our Names and Telling Our Stories,” Joellee Seed-Pihama explains how Māori make significant interconnections that value place over an individual’s name: “Our genealogical connection with all phenomena in the universe intricately interlinks us, much like a spider web. Therefore, Māori never act

or see things on just an individual level. This notion of whakapapa (genealogy) is simultaneously understood and embodied by Māori” (107). Further, Seed-Pihama demonstrates that names for Māori represent a range of relationships as she details the importance of “names as expressions of Māori language, identity, and as holders of (their) stories” (108).

Pondering the tradition of naming stories among Māori, I realized strong cross-cultural connections with Inuit naming traditions. Early on, Seed-Pihama shares a kōrero ingoa (naming story) about her children (109), which prompted me to draw comparisons to my own children’s names and the stories that come with them. Although Inuit do not necessarily have naming stories in the same sense as the Māori, my children have their own naming stories that I often tell when I talk about Inuit naming practices. When explaining how colonialism attempted to eradicate Indigenous peoples by erasing our names (116), the author describes more than just colonial practices in Aotearoa. I was reminded of the story Maggie Putulik (2015) shares of her own naming experience in her Inuit community,

when she was not initially given an Inuktitut name because of a family tragedy that happened close to her birth. However, due to their desire for her integration into the larger colonial society by becoming a nun, her family did not push for her to be given an Inuktitut name. Putulik was able to better understand her own identity by examining the impact of colonialism on Inuit through her naming story. Reading Seed-Pihama’s chapter, I drew connections highlighting the power of stories among diverse Indigenous peoples to decolonize research. Sharing these stories decolonizes research by privileging Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, and highlighting traditional pedagogy at the same time.

Decolonization is situated as an integral and active focus of each chapter of the text, and the book will be relatable to communities beyond the academy, making it different from earlier contributions on decolonization research. As the editors explain, decolonization research “is not merely ethical research in terms of the requirements of the academy or institutions; more importantly it meets the criteria set by our own communities” (7).

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