



Educational Studies Symposium 2018

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**Conversations with  
Jo-ann Archibald**  
about Indigenous Storywork as  
Pedagogy and Methodology

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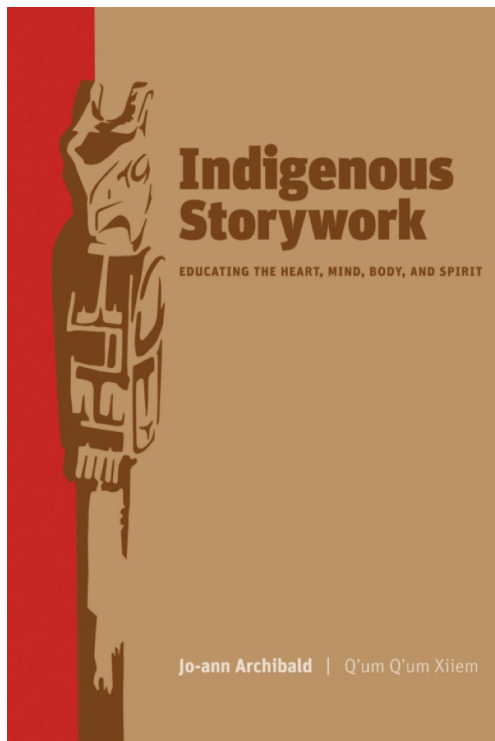
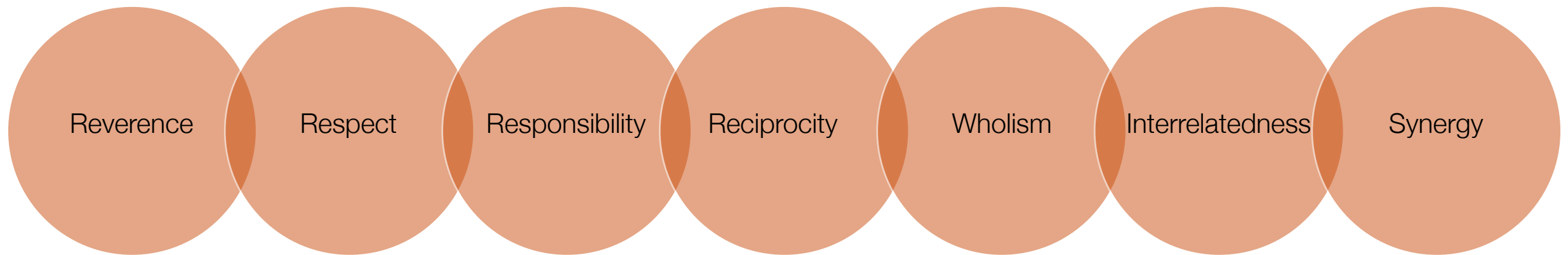
On May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018, over 100 people gathered on the unceded ancestral territory of the Musqueam people for conversations around Dr. Jo-ann Archibald's Indigenous storywork. Panels and discussions took place about experiences and issues related to using storywork as pedagogy and as methodology. Educators, school administrators, students, researchers, and faculty members sat in circles around several tables throughout the Longhouse. The conversations were lively, impassioned and thoughtful. The questions were inquisitive, respectful and honest. In shared vulnerability and courage, Dr. Jo-ann Archibald facilitated an open learning space. The teaching of *hands back, hands forward* provided a framework to reflect on and honour her legacy, as well as critically think about using storywork in the future.

We are grateful to have witnessed this symposium and the good work happening in education and research. After harvesting ideas and themes from the small group discussions, this document aims to share back key concepts and plant seeds for further engagement with storywork.

- Sam Tsuruda & Melanie Nelson

# Preparation for Indigenous Storywork

The importance of wholistically preparing for storywork was emphasized throughout the day. Specifically, panelists and participants discussed being grounded in the four R's and the seven principles of storywork as a foundation.

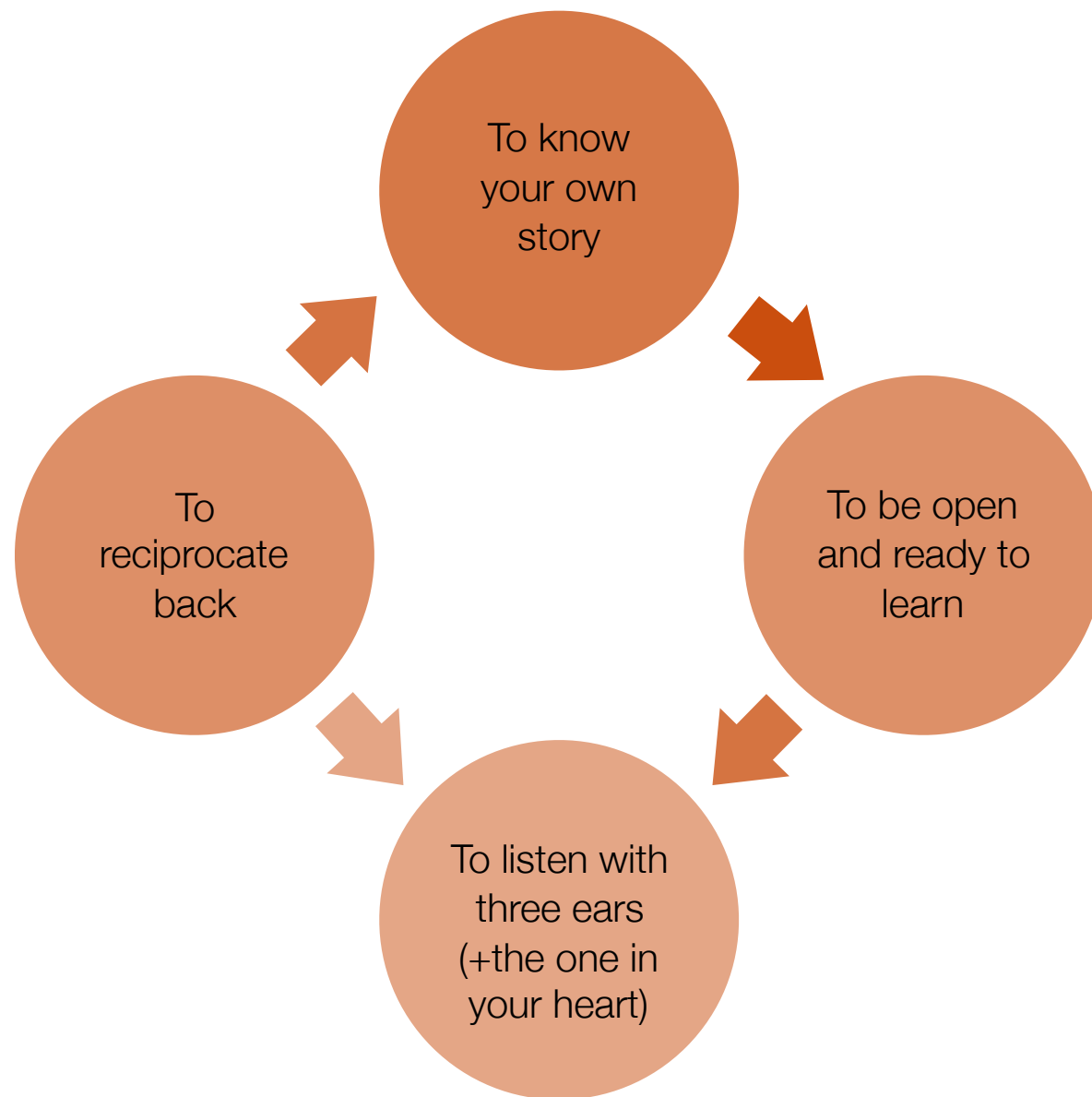


Participants shared insights around being prepared to do the work aspect of storywork - this could counteract tokenizing or checklist approaches. They discussed the importance of:

- ▶ “Doing your homework” and become informed along the way
- ▶ Allow space to reflect throughout the process
- ▶ Take the time to build relationships with knowledge keepers and tracing the roots of stories to acknowledge where the story comes

***We cannot be  
afraid to teach  
this.***

Another aspect of preparation was understanding learner responsibility. The diagram below shows the recurring themes from discussions, but is not meant to be prescriptive or exclusive to these stages. Positioning yourself in relation to Indigenous knowledge, land, and storywork was also emphasized. This could include adding personal introductions and story sharing in classrooms or research.





# Approaches to Indigenous Storywork

Underlying values and qualities wove through discussions about how to use storywork. These themes were used to develop the Wordle displayed to the right. Together they can be considered building blocks of approaches to storywork.

Shared real and hypothetical challenges of using storywork in pedagogy and methodology were also raised in small group discussions. At the same time, participants discussed ideas that could mitigate these challenges. Many of these centred on opportunities to apply a critical and reflexive lens to their practice. These are presented in the table on the next page.

Panelists presented pedagogical and methodological ideas about Indigenous storywork. Dr. Michael Marker shared three complexities of applying storywork for non-Indigenous audiences: *uncertainty*, *humility*, and *flux*. These concepts arose through conversations, particularly in light of persevering through challenges or the unknown. Brad Baker discussed the connection between personal story and identity. Dr. Amy Parent discussed storywork in the context of her research with Elders and youth. Dr. Cash Ahenakew demonstrated the role of Indigenous ceremony in the research process.



Participants discussed “aha” moments around the use of storywork that are integrated throughout this document. Other learnings included:

- ❁ ***The importance of place and context*** – “being where the stories are from to feel/experience the power of the story”
- ❁ ***Specific stories for specific times*** – depending on when the story is told and heard, there may be different meanings or understandings for the learner

| Challenge   | Possible solutions   |
|---|--|
| Readiness   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a safe space and a welcoming, understanding environment</li> <li>• Seek to understand present levels of readiness to meet people where they are at</li> <li>• Validate and value vulnerability</li> <li>• Role model for students</li> </ul>   |
| Colonial structures and Western frameworks in education (e.g., learning goals, lesson plans, “managing” students) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embrace emotion in the classroom</li> <li>• “Break out of the box”</li> <li>• Embrace discomfort and not knowing</li> <li>• Challenging colonial constructions in education - this can include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➔ Critically reflecting on what is included and what is excluded from curriculum, and the lenses that are used (e.g., analyzing stories through a Western framework)</li> <li>➔ Resisting the need for “mastery” or avoiding “being wrong”- instead embrace “failing forward”</li> <li>➔ Giving space for storywork without intended outcomes for students</li> <li>➔ Acknowledging students and Elders are teachers, honouring their voices and stories, and finding ways to lift each other up</li> <li>➔ Facilitating spaces for intergenerational and reciprocal learning</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| Time  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create more awareness about the need for decolonized understandings of time and education so as not to rush the process of including Indigenous knowledges</li> <li>• Administration could give space for teachers to explore storywork and their own identities so as not to fall into a checklist or tokenizing approach</li> <li>• Build Indigenous knowledge and storywork into professional development activities</li> </ul>  |
| Resistance or skepticism in the credibility of Indigenous knowledge or storywork                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position stories and storywork in a meaningful way</li> <li>• Share the need to sustain and uphold Indigenous knowledge for social justice, equity, and the betterment of all Canadians</li> <li>• Educate within about the true history of Canada and become comfortable with the facts in order to make teaching this knowledge the status quo</li> </ul>   |

# The Impact of Indigenous Storywork

Participants illustrated the impact that storywork can have in educational and research spaces. In the small group discussions, many examples of the power of storywork were shared:

- ▶ Stories can unite us - “stories of where we’re from help us to relate to each other”
- ▶ Stories can create shared vulnerability and mitigate conflict
- ▶ Stories can connect us with the land and place, and to our intellectual, emotional, spiritual, physical self
- ▶ Stories can expose reality, re-story history and protect land
- ▶ Stories can open the consciousness of learners to inspire and transform our minds and hearts

*Storywork and its principles can be used across curriculum, audiences and disciplines.*

For example, stories can articulate big ideas of curriculum and create passion and connection.

*Stories live inside of us.*







## Thank You

We raise our hands to Dr. Jo-ann Archibald, the panelists and all of the participants for attending and continuing the conversation, as well as to the Planning Committee, Department of Educational Studies, and the First Nations House of Learning for hosting this event.

More resources on storywork can be found on the Department of Educational Studies' website: <http://edst.educ.ubc.ca>

*Indigenous Storywork: Educating the Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit* can also be purchased from UBC Press:

<https://www.ubcpres.ca/indigenous-storywork>

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