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Towards *Amaamawi'izing* (Collaborating) in Interdisciplinary Allyship: An Example from the Feast Centre for Indigenous STBBI Research

Jackson, R.¹, Masching, R.², Gooding, W.¹, Li, A.¹, Marsdin, B.¹, & Peltier, D.²

¹School of Social Work & Department of Health, Aging and Society, Faculty of Social Sciences, KTH-312, 1280 Main Street West, Hamilton, Ontario, 905-525-9140 (Ext. 27960); jacksr@mcmaster.ca

²Canadian Aboriginal AIDS Network, 113 - 154 Willowdale Drive, Dartmouth, NS, B2V 2W4, 902-433-0900; reneem@caan.ca

ABSTRACT

Although allyship is often conceptualized as grounded in and guided by Western knowledge, it is also consistent with Indigenous knowledge systems. Inspired by our work with the Feast Centre for Indigenous STBBI Research—as work that spans the four pillars of health research—we explore how *amaamawi'izing* (collaborating) facilitates the interdisciplinary and collaborative work of scholars working alongside Indigenous communities in Canada. Similar to the Two Row Wampum as applied in research, principles of two-eyed seeing that seek to balance Western with Indigenous knowledges, and Ermine's conceptualization of research as a potentially ethical space, we conceptualize *amaamawi'izing* as grounding the work of the Feast Centre for Indigenous STBBI Research as a traditional research governance model that emphasizes action, brings diverse people together, is respectful, and appreciates difference in all its variations (culture, gender, age, sexual orientation, etc.). What differentiates *amaamawi'izing* from the other Indigenous research principles that are mentioned in this paper is its focus on the process rather than on the product of coming together, of locating our work in the in-between space of allyship. Use of *Amaamawi'izing* in research collaboration highlights the colonial underpinning that might influence community and academic partnerships. The use of *amaamawi'izing* in our work, we argue, potentially offers safe, ethical space where difference does not separate, but is inclusive, valued, and upheld.

In Canada, the requirement to do research *with* Indigenous Peoples rather than *on* them has recently been framed as an ethical obligation by Canada's three federal research agencies, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), in the Tri-Council Policy Statement 2 (TCPS2) (2018). With the expectation that researchers involve Indigenous communities directly in the research at all levels, we have seen a noticeable growth in Indigenous STBBI research and in the capacity of Indigenous Community-Based Organizations to do their own research. As McKinley and colleagues (2012) highlight, ethical partnerships underscore how Indigenous STBBI "research must be a process of fostering relationships, respect, reciprocity, and accountability" (p. 423). In this, Indigenous stakeholders from both academic and in community-based organizations, facilitate the grounding of research in Indigenous knowledge systems, adopt an anti-colonial stance, and are focused wholly on community-defined needs and aspirations. As a central feature that unpins this collaborative research, Indigenous contributions to STBBI research offer an important vehicle for couching solutions that are in harmony with Indigenous worldviews (Durie, 2004; Tsark & Braun, 2007) and are thus "rooted in Indigenous spiritual values and [...] recognize that language, land, identity, culture, and spirit are interconnected and intertwined" (Gardner, 2012, p. 125).

The development of meaningful allyship protocols that facilitate collaboration with Indigenous research partners: builds and strengthens ties to research project processes and outcomes, supports Indigenous identity, builds confidence, and enhances understanding while developing meaningful interventions. In this respect, such protocols uphold Indigenous rights to self-determination and sovereignty in research contexts. It is collaboration with trusted allies that is rapidly growing in "scale and veracity" and is shifting and "reshaping paradigms of *what research should be*" (Mataira, 2019, p. 145; italics in original). When we honour and develop respectful collaborative relationships between Indigenous community stakeholders, organizations and academic partners, we also potentially open space that creates new pathways to innovative understanding, new methods of inquiry, and the development of meaningful models of engagement that imparts knowledge "from the past, in the present, for the future" (Mataira, 2019, pp. 159; see also Fitzgerald, 2004).

The challenges posed by STBBI for Indigenous communities are, however, complex and demand respectful cooperation among diverse interdisciplinary stakeholders, including community and policy leaders. Effective interdisciplinary collaboration in Indigenous STBBI research requires an unlearning of conventional Western models of settler allyship as the most critical wise practice approach to guide interaction (Kluttz, Walker, & Walter, 2019). A critical Indigenous approach to allyship, on the other hand, "begins as an emancipatory project that forefronts the self-determination and inherent sovereignty of Indigenous peoples [as] rooted in relationships and is driven explicitly by community interests" (McKinley, et al., 2012, p. 424). It is in this place where we begin to ground the collaborative process of the Feast Centre for Indigenous STBBI Research (hereafter referred to as the Feast Centre). In doing so, we wish to define, emphasize, and foreground the principles of amaamawi'izing (collaborating). It is important to the Feast Centre that in our research partnerships, we actively foreground Indigenous knowledge systems, reciprocity, relationship, and respect to effectively respond to Indigenous community knowledge needs with respect to STBBI. We do so without attempting to deny tensions inherent in Indigenous-settler research relationship. We recognize, as did Jones and Jenkins (2008), that

the hyphen that separates Indigenous from settler need not be erased. Rather, the tensions produced in attempting to work across difference represent a positive opportunity to improved scholarship and ways of working together across that difference. In doing so, we begin by working toward a common goal with our Indigenous and settler research partners across diverse disciplines. We are aware that such may lead to the perception that in melding together diverse research partners, such potentially decentres Indigenous ways of being and knowing. Instead, we approach this work with the understanding that what separates Indigenous and settlers-colonialists in research contexts—and the tensions created by working together—is productive, and resolution of this tension is a potentially colonial project that seeks to further erase Indigenous identity.

Our paper focuses on the hyphen between “Indigenous-settler” as valuable and needed (Jones & Jenkins, 2008). However, we are aware that this may be considered an “unnatural” proposition for those more comfortable working within Western academic research collaborative frameworks. Not to be taken lightly, as Sillitoe & Marzano (2009) state, “the advance of interdisciplinarity is central to Indigenous knowledge research” (p. 15). Bearing these things in mind, the interdisciplinary context of the Feast Centre is open for critical reflection. In doing this, we begin by introducing ourselves through the Feast Centre and discussing the importance of allyship as a critical context for work across the four pillars of health research (basic, clinical, epidemiology, and the social sciences). We then position our work in the context of allyship literature, examining diverse notions of allyship. Like others have done, we too argue for the need to shift our own practices and mindsets towards decolonizing how knowledge and leadership are conceptualized and valued (Ballantyne, 2019; Kluttz, Walker, & Walter, 2019). We then consider how amaamawi’izing highlights a process through which Indigenous knowledges are foregrounded as a knowledge system that has the power to bring together the four pillars of health research with Indigenous knowledge.

THE FEAST CENTRE FOR INDIGENOUS STBBI RESEARCH

The Feast Centre is a strategic investment in high-quality research development and training in Indigenous STBBI research that contributes new knowledge and draws more Indigenous peoples formally into the research process. As authors of this paper, we are connected to the Feast Centre as investigators (Jackson), as community knowledge users (Masching), and as staff (Gooding, Peltier, Marsdin, and Li) and bring a wealth of Indigenous HIV research experience, diverse gender identities (female, male, two-spirit), and various Indigenous cultural orientations (Anishinaabe, Iroquois, and settler identities). Our pathway to achieve broader engagement is through respectful and dynamic collaborations with our diverse team of Indigenous and allied researchers, Indigenous community members, Indigenous community-based AIDS service and other organizations, in order to contribute to effective, culturally-framed responses to STBBI among Indigenous peoples in Canada. The strategic goal of the Centre is to increase the use of Indigenous knowledges in STBBI research in ways that affect positive, transformational change and reduce HIV, HCV, and other STIs. Specific objectives include: (1) Coordinate and further stimulate multi-stakeholder collaboration in Indigenous STBBI research across the key pillars of health research (clinical, basic science, epidemiology, social science) to reduce new infections and improve quality of life for Indigenous communities; (2) Contribute to the development of a

highly-skilled, multidisciplinary community of investigators, research trainees, and Indigenous community stakeholders; (3) Foster the development of Indigenous knowledge translation processes and products that accelerate the uptake of knowledge and the implementation of evidence-informed practices, policies and programs; and (4) Actively and meaningfully engage stakeholders and partners (e.g., Indigenous people living with or at risk of STBBI, community organizations, researchers, and policy) across Centre activities.

The Feast Centre is a five-year, Canada-wide initiative that aims to support the development of community and academic researchers in scholarship that is grounded in Indigenous knowledges, decolonizing approaches, and community-based research frameworks to holistically support STBBI research with Indigenous communities. This project joins key stakeholders (community, research, and policy) to advance several key strategic areas related to STBBI research, prevention, support, and care. The following activities are being pursued by the Feast Centre: (1) Support the use of Indigenous knowledges in the community-led development of Indigenous approaches to the prevention, support, and care of STBBI; (2) Support the development of implementation science approaches across all research areas in ways that seek to improve equitable access to culturally relevant STBBI prevention, testing, screening, diagnosis, treatment, support, and care; (3) Support late career scholars in their critical and theoretical scholarship; (4) Establish work/study programs for Indigenous students at all levels, including undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate research; (5) Support the meaningful inclusion of community in all Feast Centre training opportunities, but principally, in our community fellowship program; (6) Provide release time for early career scholars to establish their programs of research; (7) Support publication development via writing retreats; (8) partner with the Aboriginal HIV/AIDS Community-based Research Collaborative Centre (AHA Centre) in their biannual Wise Practices Indigenous STBBI Community-based Research conference and in McMaster Indigenous Research Institute (MIRI) events; (9) Produce an edited monograph (or papers) focused on Indigenous methodology/methods in the context of STBBI research; and (10) Support the development of culturally grounded and innovative knowledge translation products.

CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF ALLYSHIP

While allyship is central to the work that we do and is an important aspect of the interdisciplinary approach we are taking, we recognize that from both a Western and Indigenous context, allyship is not a term without political consequence. The work of allyship has been foundational to many of the academic and practice disciplines that strive to positively affect the daily lives of Indigenous peoples effected by STBBI. While allyship has been and continues to be central to the collaborative work done by Indigenous and settler researchers, the word itself has been used on many occasions to conceal power differentials that continue to disadvantage Indigenous peoples. There are many examples of fruitful and positive collaboration, but these examples should not be used to obscure the many negative examples of Indigenous-settler allyship gone wrong. Without properly taking the ongoing consequences of colonization and the unequal distribution of social and economic power into account, allyship (i.e., ‘working alongside and for’) often fails to meet the needs of Indigenous peoples to work toward significant and transformational change (Friedman, 2002). It is not only important to consider how colonial relations impact Indigenous peoples’ wellbeing, but also to deeply consider how

those Western knowledges that have disciplinary reach have impacted how we all understand and value Indigenous approaches, traditions, beliefs and knowledges (Sillitoe & Marzano, 2009). (Smith L. , 2014) Adding to the argument of power differentials, as Sefa Dei (2000) writes, an “anti-colonial discursive framework” helps us understand that “power/knowledge work positions individuals differently in the academy” (p. 117) and strives to offer a correction that elevates Indigenous knowledges as sophisticated, able to discover and know the world, and offer knowledges that also lead to positive change. If we are to actively consider the very possibility of Indigenous-settler allyship in our current context, decolonizing space for Indigenous knowing at research tables and in the academy is essential (Smith L. , 2014).

Western definitions of allyship are inconsistent and have shifted considerably over time, depending significantly on one’s own relation to power and how one sees oneself in relationship to the allyship relationship. Allyship first became popularized as a framework through which to work toward social justice in the 1960’s during the Civil Rights era (Mizock & Page, 2016). In this conceptualization of allyship, an ally was largely considered someone who did not belong to the group being allied with. Rather, the ally was someone who was often seen as holding certain social and economic power over, an example of this being white people in relation to those who were experiencing racial violence, men in relation to women, or settlers in relation to Indigenous people. In other words, depending on how it is operationalized, this way of conceptualizing allyship often fails to recognize how communities hold their own solutions and know their own realities best. With regard to Indigenous people, it often fails to recognize that since time immemorial, Indigenous peoples have developed robust knowledge systems that have gathered information towards improving the lives of Indigenous peoples (Sefa Dei, 2000; Smith L. , 2014). Not only in this earlier Western understanding of allyship, but also embedded within most current Western definitions of the term, allyship often continues to be grounded in a binarized and hierarchized relation between the ally and the person who is being allied with. Void of any critical appraisal, it is this definition that renders allyship as a suspect practice, rather than one embraced by communities being allied with.

In contemporary social work practice literature, Gibson (2014) writes that to be an ally is to actively embrace a commitment to social justice, anti-oppression, and to undoing the ways in which one has been privileged over other people based on race, sexual orientation, gender, ability, age or class, etc. In this definition of allyship, the ally is committed to doing the cognitive and affective work of unlearning their unearned privileges and working alongside those who are disadvantaged by ongoing and historic social and economic conditions to undo those power differentials. Allyship, in this sense, is deeply tied to recognizing power differentials and committing to doing work to change how power is exercised interpersonally, institutionally, and societally. Earlier versions of allyship that tended to reproduce binarized distinctions between the ally and the person or group being allied with have been updated considerably by demanding that the ally focus on supporting the person or community being allied with to meet their needs as defined by them, rather than the ally. An important part of this definition is for the ally to be willing to unlearn their own privilege. In Gibson (2014), allyship is intersectional and therefore bound up in examining how aspects of identity intersect to constitute distinct possibilities in the world. Rather than being based on binarized relations of difference, allyship that recognizes the intersectionality of identity complicates the binaries at the centre of race, ethnicity, Indigeneity, class, gender, sexuality, and ability. In this way, the ally’s identity could very well overlap in

some ways with those being allied with and be quite different in others. Clearly, Western definitions of allyship tend to shift over time according to different contexts, histories, intellectual traditions, and according to the influence of social and political movements.

In much the same way that there is no one Western definition of allyship that encompasses how it is practiced, there are also considerable differences in how allyship has been experienced and thought of within different Indigenous perspectives that speak to different contexts. Even though Indigenous nations have distinctive worldviews, histories, traditions, and current contexts, it is possible to distil some commonalities that are instructive in how best to conceptualize Indigenous allyship. Indigenous models of allyship, through the idea of “all my relations” tend to reject the hierarchized and binarized relation between ally and allied. Guided by the concept of amaamawi’izing, we devote focus to explore how the sovereignty and wellbeing of Indigenous communities can be supported in ways that meet the needs of Indigenous people as defined by Indigenous people.

In many ways, the work of the Feast Centre aims to be founded on amaamawi’izing as a guiding concept that refuses to settle the distinctions or differences at the heart of allyship. Instead of focusing on resolving tensions, it views these tensions as productive—as spaces to work through a decolonial framework guided by respect, reciprocity, and care. Jones and Jenkins (2008) instructively theorize how allyship between Indigenous and settler people is always in process. What makes the process of allyship successful, is the commitment to a decolonial future that responds to power differentials, to colonization, and to the needs of Indigenous communities as defined by Indigenous communities. What Jones and Jenkins (2008) clarify is that Indigenous-settler allyship is most beneficial when it focuses on the hyphen, on how the fraught, differentiated relation between Indigenous and settler people was constituted and on the work that needs to be done to ensure Indigenous sovereignty and wellbeing. It is in this space that there is a possibility of work being done that begins and ends by upholding Indigenous sovereignty, agency, and a commitment to supporting Indigenous communities.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERDISCIPLINARITY IN INDIGENOUS RESEARCH

Aligning with our understanding of allyship, we understand that effective interdisciplinary research teams can shift and expand pre-existing knowledge systems to create more tangible and deliverable results that benefit Indigenous peoples affected by STBBI. While individual scholars who are rooted in a discipline, or community members who have lived experience of STBBI may possess a strong understanding of certain aspects of a health issue, interdisciplinarity brings multiple perspectives to bear on a particular problem or subject, expanding the menu of options that are available to understand the phenomenon in question and offering insights that might never otherwise be broached if viewed through only one disciplinary lens (Charles, Harris, & Carlson, 2016). As part of the process of thinking through our own relations with interdisciplinarity and Indigenous-settler allyship, we have participated and witnessed shifts in how we, in the past, conceptualized allyship, to one where we now position ourselves as active change-agents who bring our full selves into the research process. Allyship as understood through the concept of amaamawi’izing is central to how the Feast Centre was conceptualized as,

in part, an interdisciplinary hub of scholarly/community researchers addressing issues that privilege the involvement of Indigenous communities.

Within a Canadian context, the utilization of interdisciplinary teams has facilitated members of Indigenous communities to take ownership in their own initiatives and projects and has brought Indigenous knowledge to the public eye. Specific objectives of these initiatives can include reversing Indigenous health disparities, pushing back against Eurocentric dominance, and bringing Indigenous knowledge to mainstream activism or media. In a study conducted by Battiste, Bell, and Findlay (2002), the authors highlighted the limitations, injustices, and the continued perpetuation of colonization within educational institutions. Battiste and colleagues (2002) assess multiple sites where they see real potential for change that would address the deficit in public understanding, evasion, or denial of Indigenous knowledge. One of these areas is educational materials where Indigenous knowledge is not sufficiently or appropriately available through books, journals, theses, or dissertations, or from teachers and university professors. While challenging the need to bring Indigenous knowledge to the forefront of education, one of the main challenges to achieving this goal is found in accessibility and knowledge translation of Indigenous knowledge. The development of interdisciplinary materials and the expansion of Indigenous knowledge into multiple fields not only contributes to breaking this barrier by supporting a greater uptake of Indigenous knowledges within the world of research, but also integrates settler and Indigenous knowledges based on respect and equality.

As interdisciplinary teams grow to expand their influence and research, so do the networks of individual researchers. As knowledge becomes more diverse and nuanced, opportunities and possibilities for future research begin to emerge. Furthermore, in networking and bringing together community members and multi-disciplinary scholars for the purposes of knowledge creation, diverse perspectives contribute to an enhanced understanding of global challenges and how other localized Indigenous groups have responded to the challenges of colonization and Eurocentric dominance (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002; Charles, Harris, & Carlson, 2016). As Indigenous studies and the use of Indigenous knowledge expand nationally and internationally, the establishment of international interdisciplinary teams consisting of local Indigenous community members bring forth an essential critical perspective towards colonization at a global level. At a global level, scholars have challenged the dominance of Eurocentric education and its grasp over pedagogy and knowledge creation (Charles, Harris, & Carlson, 2016). The unification of Indigenous peoples from around the world not only unites them in their shared, yet diverse, experiences of colonization, but creates opportunity for collaboration that extends beyond international borders. While experiences of colonization and imperialism vary based on the unique experiences of different cultures and communities, the advancement of Indigenous pedagogy and community engagement strategies have led to the development of Indigenous literature, initiatives, and strategies (Battiste, Bell, & Findlay, 2002; McConaghy, 2000). When considering the product of Indigenous-driven initiatives at a global level, sharing perspectives becomes a collection of assessable knowledges that can be used toward mobilizing capabilities to challenge localized-Indigenous related challenges.

AMAAMAWI'IZING AS THEORY GUIDING THE FEAST CENTRE'S APPROACH TO ALLYSHIP

In considering *amaamawi'izing* (i.e., collaborating) as an Indigenous theoretical framework informing how we occupy interdisciplinary spaces, we begin as did Absolon (2011), with a simple acknowledgement that “[our] cultural identit[ies] precede [our] academic identit[ies]. [We are] both [Indigenous] and scholar” (Absolon, 2011, p. 112). As Indigenous peoples working in interdisciplinary spaces, *amaamawi'izing* embodies the principles of “all my relations” that in many ways honours our first teacher, *Ashkaakaamikwe* (Mother Earth). It is an active stance that recognizes *amaamawi'izing* as embracing action towards coming together with one mind, with respect and inclusive approaches. It is a sophisticated approach to collaboration premised on deep, respectful listening, appreciating difference, and striving through fulsome discussion to achieve consensus that positions Indigenous consciousness and ways of being as central.

In describing the collaborative space of the Feast Centre in this way, and in taking space as part of an interdisciplinary environment, we enter the spaces that carry that history of Indigenous knowledges to disrupt the colonial history operating in research contexts. We embrace the idea that multiplicity in terms of worldview, epistemology, and ethics potentially leads to positive transformative social change. As Tedlock (2011) envisions, we aim to “walk in balance along the edges of these worlds. ‘There is beauty and strength in being both: a double calling, a double love’” (p. 337). In bridging worldviews and ways of knowing together in interdisciplinary spaces, we actively express the principle of *amaamawi'izing*. We purposefully create space where observable actions of the body, together with unseen actions of the mind, come together to consider the totality of a thing in ways that lead to positive change. For the Feast Centre, this can also be a dual place and space that can both be occupied outside of the confines of institutions and institutional learnings. It is a space of deep listening and observation for our interdisciplinary team. In *Anishinaabemowin*, the language frames what we hear, ‘we see what we hear’, which is why storytelling and oral traditions have always been a key part of learning.

IMPARTING WISDOM: INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND ALLYSHIP

When considering the benefits of interdisciplinary teams for new, early career, and emerging researchers, the Feast Centre offers significant benefits, including opportunities to strengthen research training and capacity, networking, and the development of meaningful mentorship relationships. Similarly, when allyship with Indigenous communities is incorporated into the structure of the team, all established researchers are also given the opportunity to immerse themselves in local communities and culture. As part of this process, researchers become familiar with Indigenous related issues, the importance of Indigenous epistemologies, and begin to understand how Indigenous worldviews are woven into the fabric of Indigenous, community-driven research. In step with Indigenous knowledges, it is knowledge that is imparted through active and deliberate mentorship and engagement. In contrast to models of cultural competency, where models focus on facilitating and controlling the circumstances to allow for free-flowing expressions of Indigenous culture (Cavino, 2013; Chouinard & Cousins, 2007), decolonizing and Indigenous methodologies invite researchers to become immersed in the culture and to incorporate Indigenous knowledge and worldviews into the research itself. Looking towards how

this translates for young researchers hoping to engage in ethical community-based research with Indigenous communities, researchers become immersed in an environment where they understand that interacting and learning from local community members is equally as important as classroom learning in developing their professional profile.

Amundson and colleagues (2008) dived deeper into this area in developing an innovative approach to understanding student internships on American Indian reservations. Looking specifically towards interprofessional or interdisciplinary experience, students reported an increased understanding of the roles and responsibilities of other professionals and increased teamwork. Racher (2002) also noted the importance of students working collaboratively on assignments, thus enabling them to share knowledge and their perspectives. Not only did student teams work together on patient case studies, but following her recommendation, they also worked collectively to develop and implement a project that was beneficial to the community. This opened the potential for students to not only learn different roles from different disciplines, but also imparted an understanding of how cultural sensitivity and allyship looks different based on each individual case. Allyship here is relational and rests on the assembled team learning about community needs, developing an understanding of how the community operates, learning about the local culture, and engaging in the culture through the practice of research. Throughout this ongoing process of learning and relationship building with the community, allyship becomes nested in the process as they move towards a unified goal.

WHAT INDIGENOUS WORLDVIEWS BRING TO WESTERN INTERDISCIPLINARY ALLYSHIP

An uncritical application of interdisciplinary models of allyship in health research tends to reflect and reproduce profound colonial inequities in the current working of academic and healthcare institutions (Jones & Jenkins, 2008; Morris, 2017). A transformational shift is crucial, whereby interdisciplinary allyships become deeply grounded in Indigenous epistemological frameworks, approaches, and methodologies that encourage authentic, respectful and reciprocal relationships (Haines, Du, & Trevorrow, 2018). Apgar, Argumendo & Allen (2009, p. 259) assert that interdisciplinary allyships in health research are often grounded in Western, scientific thought, and that Indigenous knowledges become filtered through this lens based on a call for “absolute truths based on ‘verifiable and linear’ facts” (p. 259). Apgar, Argumendo & Allen (2009) call for the uptake of Indigenous methodologies in interdisciplinary research since Indigenous knowledges offer, “collective dialogical processes amongst knowledge systems, through contextualized, holistic frameworks that offer adaptive solutions to complex issues” (Apgar, Argumendo, & Allen, 2009, p. 260). Indigenous peoples have a longstanding history of specialized knowledge exchange, whereby, Indigenous experts collectively share their knowledge and healing practices for the health and well-being of their communities using a holistic, relational, and multi-directional approach to research (Haines, Du, & Trevorrow, 2018; Lilley, 2018). The concept of interdisciplinary allyship is relatively new in the history of the Western approach, as disciplines have often worked in isolation in a hierarchical, siloed model of research (Haines, Du, & Trevorrow, 2018). As alluded to earlier, this hierarchy is often reproduced in the Indigenous-settler interdisciplinary allyship. We argue, as others have, that allyship must be reconstituted through research processes that foreground Indigenous voices—

from planning through to initiation and completion of the research project. Integral in this process is the need to draw on Indigenous research methods and collaborative approaches, such as storytelling and ceremonial methods to frame the research in Indigenous frameworks of knowledge exchange (Freeman & Van Katwyk, 2020; Jones & Jenkins, 2008). Furthermore, it becomes essential to the development of ethical guidelines that encourage a critical and reflexive approach to interdisciplinary allyship that involves Indigenous communities. Such is vital towards continuously redressing power imbalances that resurface within Indigenous-settler relationships (Levac, McMurty, Stitenstra, Baikie, Hanson, & Mucina, 2018).

DECOLONIZING INTERDISCIPLINARY ALLYSHIP

It is crucial that Indigenous-settler interdisciplinary allyships are framed by Indigenous methodologies and knowledges. It is also essential that settler allies actively engage in decolonizing efforts and not just lay claim to allyship (Smith, Puckett, & Simon, 2015). Freeman & Van Katwyk (2020) encourage the use of the Two Row Wampum to guide collaborative, cross-discipline, research partnerships. The Two Row Wampum Treaty, first acknowledged in 1613, was created by the Haudenosaunee as a governing treaty with Dutch settlers. The Indigenous wisdom at the foundation of this treaty remains critical for redefining relationships between Indigenous and settler peoples (Freeman & Van Katwyk, 2020). The wampum belt is a symbolic representation of this treaty, and it contains two rows of purple beads to signify the Dutch and Haudenosaunee water vessels travelling the River of Life, encompassing their different cultures and values. These allies travel side by side, parallel, and without interference (Freeman & Katwyk, 2020). The Two Row Wampum can be applied to Indigenous-settler interdisciplinary allyships, whereby all members of this allyship act in non-interference and in reciprocal relationships that honour continuous action towards reconciliation (Levac, McMurty, Stitenstra, Baikie, Hanson, & Mucina, 2018). Like our own use of allyship principles embedded in amaamawi'izing, the Two Row Wampum urges the acceptance of differences and promotes a parallel, balanced allyship that does not infringe on the humanity, autonomy, and self-determination of the other.

Similarly, Martin (2012) encourages the concept of “Two-Eyed Seeing” developed by Mi'kmaw Elders, Albert and Murdena Marshall, as an approach that encompasses both Indigenous and Western worldviews and does not allow one to dominate the other. Two-eyed seeing advocates being mindful of both Western and Indigenous epistemologies and critically reflecting of one's own biases. Two-Eyed seeing uses a non-biased approach to seek holistic clarity in the understanding of Indigenous and Western knowledges, as it fosters a reflexive relationship which encourages researchers to maintain awareness of their own preconceptions and ways of being. Again, like the principle of amaamawi'izing and the Two Row Wampum, Two-Eyed seeing can be applied to interdisciplinary allyships and promotes a balanced understanding of both Indigenous and Western epistemologies through the encouragement of critical reflexivity in the context of genuinely, reciprocal relationships. In short, Two-Eyed seeing seeks to create an epistemological equilibrium between Indigenous and Western knowledges that shifts us away from the privileging of Western, hegemonic discourses to embrace Indigenous worldviews (Martin, 2012).

The Two Row Wampum and Two-Eyed seeing encourages researchers to act in non-interference and to develop an understanding and appreciation of Indigenous knowledges in balance and parallel to Western knowledge (Freeman & Van Katwyk, 2020; Martin, 2012). However, they may also pose limitations to the genuine uptake of Indigenous epistemology and methodology in interdisciplinary allyships. As argued above, the concept of interdisciplinarity is inherently Western and this potentially creates a fundamental power imbalance during the inception of this allyship. As Jackson (2019), highlights, it is a relationship built with the ‘master’s tools’ and we must shift this by bringing Indigenous knowledges to the foreground of interdisciplinary research. Western structures are plagued by the marginalization of Indigenous peoples and it is essential to shift from a Western approach, which unduly privileges settler researchers, to create meaningful research spaces that actualize the uptake of Indigenous epistemologies in health research (Jackson, 2019). It is essential that we foreground Indigenous knowledges in interdisciplinary allyship by promoting true collaboration that replenishes and restores the health and well-being of Indigenous communities (Brant, 1990).

Ermine (2007) proposes the concept of the “ethical space” which characterizes the theoretical space between two identities—the Indigenous and Western thought worlds. It is a space where cross-cultural conversations begin, where diversity is embraced, and askew any form of proprietary relationship. It is a neutral space that continuously reinforces the worldview and humanity of one another. From our perspectives as leaders in the Feast Centre, we draw on principles of *amaamawi’izing*, and, like Ermine (2007), advocate for interdisciplinary relationships grounded in Indigenous values, that encourage respectful reciprocal relationships that are shaped by honouring and embracing one another’s differences. Moreover, it is imperative that we create this ethical space to foreground Indigenous epistemologies and research methods to protect and benefit Indigenous peoples in their quest for greater health and well-being because Indigenous communities have always known how to care best for their people (Jackson, 2019). It is crucial that settler allies cultivate an in-depth understanding of Indigenous methodologies to shift and disrupt their worldviews and core beliefs to create an authentic, critical and decolonial interdisciplinary allyship (Haines, Du, & Trevorrow, 2018).

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

The writing of this paper itself has been a process of *amaamawi’izing* that goes beyond Western notions of allyship because it refuses binarized and hierarchized differentiations and still holds central traditional knowledges and understandings grounded in Indigenous teachings. The goal of the work of the “ally” should not fundamentally be to offer “help” in a way that the ally determines or is comfortable. Rather, the goal of allyship is to join with those being allied in space that privileges a relational ethics that is both anti-colonial and anti-oppressive (Gehl, 2011). In this respect, the Feast Centre through *amaamawi’izing* centres the diversity of experiences of Indigenous peoples affected by STBBI. As Jones and Jenkins (2008) write, working to address systemic and social inequalities between Indigenous and settler people must always be grounded by a relational ethic, and Gehl (2011) clearly articulates, is work that demands reflexivity, an understanding of historical conditions that create inequalities, is attentive to the complexities of power relations, and that opens up spaces in which Indigenous communities and scholars are heard.

The health of Indigenous peoples is often described as shaped by structural violence and oppression that is also widely acknowledged to be rooted in social, political, and economic circumstances. In studying the health of Indigenous peoples, scholars often reap benefits aligned with their privileged position in society from the same oppressive, colonial systems, and structures (Nixon, 2019; Smith, Puckett, & Simon, 2015). Jones & Jenkins (2008) encourage us to work the hyphen, as referred to above, as space where these truths can be made transparent and explored in the context of Indigenous and settler allyship. We echo Jones & Jenkins' (2008) use of Indigenous-settler because it highlights the very hyphen at the centre of Feast's work and centres Indigenous autonomy. We must meaningfully consider interdisciplinary allyship as possibly reframing this relationship within an understanding of privilege that is hierarchical (Jones & Jenkins, 2008; Nixon, 2019). We advocate that allies critically analyze their complicity in reaping unearned benefits in an unjust system to create genuine reciprocal relationships with Indigenous allies (Jones & Jenkins, 2008). This critical, reflexive exercise is meant to inspire action, because the act of knowing and doing nothing is an act of oppression itself. Unless allies are willing to move from their places of complicity to redress the social system which affords them unearned privilege, they also wield unearned power in the interdisciplinary allyship with Indigenous peoples (Jones & Jenkins, 2008; Nixon, 2019). In doing so, we potentially shift the power dynamics in which allyship occurs by encouraging allied researchers to be curious and humble students of Indigenous pedagogies.

Amaamawi'izing, like the Two Row Wampum and two-eyed seeing, contributes to the focus on working and preserving the hyphen because it refuses to separate what is often distinguished as the inside from the outside. The body, the identity, family history, traditions, past and future generations, social, historical and economic contexts, and one's relation to the land are all aspects of *amaamawi'izing* that we bring to this work. What this means is that for each of us—the ways that we are understood in the world, the ways that we experience our bodies and our health—our relations to each other come into our scholarly pursuits. This is not an easy process since bringing our full selves means bringing our histories of joys, strengths, resilience, and ways that we have been and continue to be hurt into our scholarly work. It bears repeating, it is also scholarly work that demands an ongoing commitment to addressing systemic inequalities and decolonizing our practices and our relations in the work that we do and thereby refuses settler innocence. *Amaamawi'izing* speaks to the very process of learning from each other through deep listening and appreciation of difference, complexity, tradition, and fullness. Tying this to a political imperative to address inequalities is the starting point for the type of allyship that we are building together. All our relations.

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