



VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Welcome to *[Voices from the Field](#)*, a podcast produced by the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (NCCA), which focuses on innovative research and community-based initiatives promoting the health and well-being of First Nation, Inuit and Metis peoples in Canada.

This conversation was hosted by the [Office of Indigenous Affairs at the University of Winnipeg](#) in partnership with the [First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba](#). It took place on April 11th, 2018 at the University of Winnipeg.

The music in his podcast is by Blue Dot Sessions and appears under a Creative Commons licence. Learn more at www.sessions.blue.

EPISODE 8

Indigenous Research Fireside Chat: A Conversation on Governance and Indigenous Research

In this episode you'll hear a conversation on governance and Indigenous research with guests Linda Tuhiwai Smith and Bonnie Healy. This Indigenous research fireside chat was hosted by the Office of Indigenous Affairs at the University of Winnipeg in partnership with the First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba. It took place on April 11th, 2018 at the University of Winnipeg and was moderated by Vanessa Tait, a member of South Indian Lake, Manitoba and a policy analyst and researcher with Nanaandawewigamig. Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith of Aotearoa, or New Zealand, is an internationally accomplished scholar and researcher who has worked in and influenced the field of Māori education and health for many years. Her groundbreaking book, *[Decolonizing Methodologies, Research and Indigenous Peoples](#)* remains an international bestseller. She currently serves as professor of Māori and Indigenous Studies at the University of Waikato. Bonnie Healy is a registered nurse from the Kainai Nation, or Blood Tribe. She is currently the Operations Manager of the Alberta First Nations Information Governance Centre. Her clear understanding of, and passion for, data as a tool for change drives her work with First Nations leadership and communities. Over the course of this program, both women will provide insights into opportunities and challenges on doing and supporting research, including health research, with Indigenous communities as Indigenous scholars.

BIO



Photo Credit: Te Rāwhitiroa Bosch

[Dr. Linda Tuhiwai Smith](#) of Aotearoa (New Zealand) is an internationally accomplished scholar and researcher who has worked in and influenced the field of Māori education and health for many years. Her groundbreaking book [*Decolonising Methodologies Research and Indigenous Peoples*](#) (1998) remains an international best seller, translated into Spanish, Chinese, Arabic, Italian, and Bhasa Indonesian. This seminal work is a foundational resource for critiques of the existing relationship between dominant institutional research protocols and Indigenous knowledge systems. It has led to many other authors publishing books that guide students, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, today and into the future.

Smith is herself widely published in numerous journals and books. She continues to inspire Indigenous thinkers to become scholars of their own epistemologies, and to recognize and relearn that Indigenous peoples need to lead research based on their own traditional ways of inquiry.

Smith has held several positions, including the founding Co-Director of the [Maori Centre of Research Excellence](#), the Pro-Vice Chancellor Māori and Dean of the [School of Māori and Pacific Development](#) at the University of Waikato in New Zealand. She is currently Professor of [Maori and Indigenous Studies](#) at the University of Waikato.

Smith has received many awards for research excellence and contribution to Maori education. In 2013 she was honoured as a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for her services in education and to Māori people. She was made a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand in 2016. In 2017 she received the Prime Minister's Award for Lifetime Achievement in Education.

With her colleague and husband, Professor Graham Smith, she co-developed the first undergraduate and graduate courses on Māori education and Indigenous education to be taught at a New Zealand university.

Smith provides an invaluable reference point for any institution committed to Indigenizing its spaces and approaches to scholarship. She has called out clearly for academic institutions to recognize that Indigenous knowledge(s) should not be subordinate to dominant scholarly knowledge(s), but rather must be respected as parallel ways of knowing.

BIO



Bonnie Healy is a First Nations Blackfoot woman from the Kainai Nation (Blood Tribe) in Southern Alberta. Bonnie is currently the lead for the [Alberta First Nations Information Governance Centre](#) (AFNIGC).

Bonnie's experience and expertise in First Nations information systems gives her a clear understanding and strong passion for using data as a tool for igniting change. In doing so, this information has provided a voice for Alberta's First Nations Leadership to the right of self-determination, control, and jurisdiction in reliable research and accurate statistics. This work is derived from the Alberta Chief's mandate to uphold the First Nations principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP®) of First Nations data, information, and traditional knowledge. Ms. Healy's work with leadership and First Nations communities provides the ability to liaise and facilitate relationships between Western systems and First Nations identified priorities to support the recognition of First Nations' jurisdiction and governance in the collection and use of First Nations information and data throughout research initiatives.

Bonnie is an advocate, collaborator, and strongly believes that through partnerships we can positively impact health outcomes for First Nations in Alberta and across Canada.

TRANSCRIPT

Vanessa Tait – Ninanskomitin, thank you all for joining us here at the fireside chat. I would like you to imagine that we are sitting by a fire as that is the space where our ancestors, our relatives, and our knowledge keepers told us stories, shared teachings and enlightened our spirits with their knowledge and sharing of journeys. As we are going to be hearing from these two amazing Indigenous women who are trailblazers for each and every one of us here today, today this is a sacred space of dialogue and we look forward to the discussion. So the first question is what does self-determination and research mean to you as Indigenous researchers?

Linda Tuhiwai Smith – I think it means multiple things in terms of research because there is research for becoming self-determining as Indigenous peoples and then there is research that a self-determined people might determine. You can sort of imagine that we've got to try and achieve, one is to use knowledge to inform our struggles for self-determination, and the other one is to imagine what it means in this century to be a self-determining Indigenous peoples – as an Indigenous Nation, an Indigenous community, an

Indigenous family, an Indigenous individual - because each of those entities is an embodiment of self-determination. One expects then that individuals practice being self-determining as an everyday practice. I think research plays a contribution in that but is not the only determinant of how that might look and how we might imagine it. So I tend to see research as our way of re-creating, reclaiming and creating knowledge, both new knowledge but also retrieving the knowledge of our ancestors that we need to live with today, and I think that research is just one part of a wider puzzle of self-determination, but it is an important part.

Bonnie Healy – The words that I’ll share about self-determination in my understanding as a Blackfoot person, they all come from my ancestors and my Elders. I am the great-great-grand-daughter of Headchief Red Crow who signed our Treaty 7 when we entered into those relationships. When I talk to our government partners and our funders, both federally and provincially, in Alberta, I make it very important for them to understand that self-determination and sovereignty weren’t part of Treaty negotiations. My ancestors didn’t give up their identities and sovereign acknowledgements as Blackfoot people when they entered into Treaty. They entered into Treaty with the understanding that they would share the land with the settlers. The Treaty relationship with my ancestors was done in ceremony. The meaning on our side is when we enter into a Treaty relationship it’s the utmost promise that you are going to uphold what you said you were going to do and you close it in ceremony. As Leroy Littlebear says, “it’s as good as putting it on stone”, so the ten commandments, so to speak. I guess the quickest way, and I love the way Leroy Littlebear states it, he says “the quickest way to self-determination is knowing your language. If you don’t speak Blackfoot, you don’t think Blackfoot”. It is important for you, if you are going to be self-determined, to think Indigenous and for me to know my language – to think Blackfoot.

Vanessa Tait – kinananskomitin [thank you] for sharing. Further to the question, can you describe one accomplishment as well as challenge you may have experienced as an Indigenous researcher to assert self-determination in research and how have you addressed these?

Linda Tuhiwai Smith – Singular moments, no. But I know if I looked back on my career and on almost 40 years of being a researcher and an educator, one of the most transformational that have happened in our world is that we have communities now who naturally think that they can do the research, they can write the proposal, they can govern the research, they have the researchers in the community, and they can publish. To me, that’s what gives me an indication that our communities are in much greater control. My final point about self-determination is that it is not the end point. We were self-determining until colonization arrived. We seek that sort of legal, if you like, definition of self-determination, but that’s not the end point. The end point is being self-determining peoples and we don’t really know what that looks like. I think we know that it doesn’t look like what it used to because we have also changed. Many of our institutions that we had prior to

colonization have disappeared, some of which were disappeared deliberately by us because they are no longer useful. We built new institutions and those institutions fit our times. So in the future what does it mean to be self-determining? I think we will build new institutions, we will have new kinds of relationships, we will try to be new kinds of Indigenous peoples, but I can't determine that. My role is to help create the spaces, the ideas, and the language for how we might imagine that.

Bonnie Healy – To really make sure that free and prior informed consent and the principles of ownership, control, access and possession [OCAP] are upheld in any data collection relationship, and this includes research. My first OCAP data sharing agreement was not with Alberta, was not with an academic institution, was not with Canada, it was with the WHO [World Health Organization]. The accomplishment of having that relationship and having that data sharing agreement was a huge challenge but was also a huge win. What it did was that it established a precedence and it said “if I can have a data sharing agreement with the World Health Organization, then you as an academic institution, or you as a province, or you as a federal government, you can have this too”. So it is really trying to move in those ways that you can achieve those highest things. The challenges are achieving ethical space and those ethical relationships and the wins are when it happens.

Vanessa Tait – What advice would you offer to those students who are interested in pursuing a career as an Indigenous scholar?

Linda Tuhiwai Smith – What does it mean to be an Indigenous scholar? I think what it means is to take on, you know, a great deal of responsibility for defending our people, for trying to create spaces for our people in often quite hostile environments because those spaces offer necessary opportunities, I think, for our own communities. I think my generation has been more political and has seen the academy as an institution that needed to be transformed in order for Indigenous scholarship to exist, let alone thrive. I think the next generation has other responsibilities. We will always have to defend our spaces, I think, in those kinds of institutions. That is just defending the space but there is also the requirement to defend what our people do. Scholarship is important, but understand why you are doing that. Do you have to major in Indigenous knowledge? No. I've got great young colleagues who are philosophers, they're scientists, they're in the academic legal space and all kinds of disciplines. They don't necessarily study Indigenous knowledge but they identify as Indigenous scholars. They participate in the community of Indigenous scholars. They mentor Indigenous students. I do hear some going, “oh, I don't know why we are the ones who get asked to look after the problem students” (i.e. the Indigenous ones). Well I think it's an honour.

Bonnie Healy – I think the first advice is to know yourself, be grounded in who you are. If you really, really know yourself, and if you are an Indigenous person – know your language – so you can start to think like that

Indigenous person. If you know yourself and [be] grounded in who you are, you know where your values systems and belief systems are from, you can have that better understanding – especially if you are non-Indigenous coming to work with First Nations – to really be open to a parallel worldview and to know that your worldview is Western and that is where your value system and where you come from – to really be open to the parallels. When you learn self-actualization and learn who you are, especially who you are as an Indigenous person, and understanding that Western education doesn't make you the expert on anything, it is good to have it, to have that foundational theory, to really understand how to guide and support those that need to have voice in research. As a new researcher, find those mentors who are going to gently transfer that knowledge and their understanding to you as you go through life and become stronger, and then you have that responsibility to transfer that to the younger generations. So if you are taking on that work in this world, it's important to find those people that are going to support you in what it is that you want to do. Don't get stuck on the end thing of my PhD or my thesis or, you know, my grant deliverables or ... I need to have some outcomes of publications, because if you get stuck on those end things, you are going to miss the importance of building those good relationships. In order to have those good relationships, so when you're on your own, go into a Nation that you are wanting to do work with and don't even mention research for about a year, but you get to know those people and you get to know their way of life and the way they understand the world. Then you can start working with them on what are their priorities. What do they want to change? What do they want to fix and how can you support them?

Vanessa Tait – So this is on the other side of things...what advice would you offer researchers, whether they be Indigenous or non-Indigenous, who are interested in undertaking Indigenous research?

Linda Tuhiwai Smith – That is something that you prepare for, something you train and something you read about, something that you find mentors for. It's like any field of research. If anything, some disciplines might argue that your role is go into a community almost as a naïve observer. You immerse yourself in it and have that immersive experience. I can see why they might argue what that's about, but it is very hard as an Indigenous researcher to go into any kind of Indigenous community and be naïve. I don't think that taking on Indigenous research is a simple or an easy option. I think it's a thoughtful practice. For me it's been a life career doing Indigenous research and I don't feel by any means an expert in it. I'm always a learner around Indigenous research. We're the most researched peoples in the world. I still hear that from Indigenous peoples all around the world. This perception, I struggled with it, what does it mean to believe you're the most researched people in the world? What does that actually mean? Because it just physically, it makes me want to pull back. There is something about the penetration of the gaze of researchers from outside, something about the intrusion, something about the body of a researcher, something about the power dynamics of a researcher. That is how I started, trying to put this puzzle together of being a researcher.

Sometimes I might define myself as a Māori woman researcher, or an Indigenous researcher, or decolonizing researcher, or Kaupapa Māori researcher. I think those are all kind of labels but they're not necessarily ones that complete the identity. They are not sufficient yet in view to say what that all means. I think they are all part of an incomplete puzzle.

Bonnie Healy – I think that Linda has given you some excellent understandings through lived experience on how to really think about this idea of doing research with Indigenous people in a very self-actualized, understanding of who you are as a person. It is important to know the policies that you are bound by. If you are going to enter a research relationship with Indigenous people and you get a grant from one of the tri-councils, know Chapter 9. I helped co-write Chapter 9 in the sense of I will now own any of that chapter – there are too many biblical words in it – “mays” and “shalls” – there was no wordsmithing it, it was impossible. But what I always tell researchers is the most important thing in Chapter 9 is the preamble. The preamble states that First Nations protocols and research ethics will pre-empt that Chapter. That is the most important piece in that Chapter 9 and that tri-council. Know the policies and know your limitations. If you are doing research as an academic individual, as a faculty member trying to have tenure within an institution, you need to know what you can and cannot sign for. Don't come into an Indigenous community promising something when you actually don't have the authority to do it. Those are things that are very important to Indigenous people. They will fight for intellectual property and your institution won't let them have it. Those are things you need to understand. What is their policy around that? What is their policy around free and prior informed consent? Then you yourself as a researcher, one of the things that I found researchers love is that they own that data like it's their first born, right? You ask a researcher, “who owns that data?” and they say, “I do”. No, that is not your lived experience. You did not give this data, this comes from a place and a people. Know the rightful owners. So everything I talked about, about that worldview of which it comes from...you have respect [for] the possession piece (of OCAP). Know right away, when you are going into an Indigenous relationship, that the rightful owner needs to be recognized in the ownership of that information because they are the ones who are going to have to help you contextualize the information from their worldview and you need to be okay with that. So that is why it is really important to know yourself and know your limitations. If the university or the institution doesn't have the policies that are updated with the promises of the TRC [the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada], and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, then you work with those policy makers to make sure it is updated and changed so that it's amended so that the academic institutions can have those relationships. Now, I am a reviewer on CIHR [Canadian Institutes for Health Research], I'm part of their reviewer group, your heart has to be in it, you know, especially if you are an Indigenous person and you are doing research with your own people. You have to sit with them in ceremony until the end of your life, so if you wrong them or harm them in any way, you are going to have to remember that. You are still going to have to sit beside

them. Even when you leave this physical world, you'll have to have ancestral accountability. Knowing what you are doing, trying to do it in the best way that you can, and knowing the limitations of the Western policies and legislation. Thank you.

Vanessa Tait – Kia ora and kininaniskomitin [thank you].

To hear more podcasts in this series, go to the [Voices from the Field](#) homepage located on the website of the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health, nccah.ca.

National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health
(NCCAH)
3333 University Way
Prince George, British Columbia
V2N 4Z9 Canada

Tel: (250) 960-5250
Email: nccah@unbc.ca
Web: nccah.ca

Centre de collaboration nationale de la santé autochtone
(CCNSA)
3333 University Way
Prince George, Colombie-Britannique
V2N 4Z9 Canada

Tél : 250 960-5250
Courriel : ccnsa@unbc.ca
Site web : ccnsa.ca

© 2018 National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health (NCCAH). This publication was funded by the NCCAH and made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.