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Creating Third Epistemological Spaces with Indigenous Communities:

A Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk Methodology

Diane-Laure Arjaliès[1]
darjalies@ivey.ca
Ivey Business School, Western University (Canada)

Julie Bernard
Julie.bernard@uwaterloo.ca
School of Environment, Enterprise and Development, University of Waterloo (Canada)

Sam Whiteye
sam.whiteye@carolinian.org
Community leader from Eelūnapéewi Lahkéewiit (Canada)
Indigenous Leadership Director at Carolinian Canada

Bobby Banerjee
Bobby.Banerjee.1@city.ac.uk
Bayes Business School, City St George's University of London (United Kingdom)

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Abstract

This article offers insights into the Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk methodology. Developed by Mi'kmaq Elder Albert Marshall in Nova Scotia, Canada, Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk advocates a synergistic blend of two perspectives, or eyes: one Indigenous and one Western, each embedded in its respective knowledge system and way of knowing. We describe the unique characteristics of this integrative methodology and offer various forms of collaboration employing Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk, which we refer to as *Territory-Based*, *Team-Based*, *Nation-Based,* and *Indigenous Collective-Based*. We then address the challenges of implementing Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk by discussing our experience as partners in a community-based participatory research project. The article offers critical insights and proposes strategies for creating and nurturing inclusive and diverse epistemological spaces. This work serves as both a call to action and a guide for researchers to rethink and reshape their methodologies by respectfully engaging with diverse ways of knowing.

Keywords: Braiding – Indigenous Knowledge Systems – Third Epistemological Spaces – Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk – Western Scientific Paradigms.

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Introduction

Over the last few decades, there has been an increasing interest in understanding Indigenous perspectives, knowledges, and ways of knowing in management and organization studies (MOS) (Bastien, Coraiola, & Foster, 2023; Colbourne, Moroz, Hall, Lendsay, & Anderson, 2020; Hamann et al., 2020; Salmon, Chavez, & Murphy, 2023; Seremani & Clegg, 2016). The twin crises of climate change and biodiversity loss have notably stimulated interest in Indigenous knowledges that underpin sustainable land (co)management practices, biodiversity conservation and adaptive responses to climate change (Souther, Colombo, & Lyndon, 2023; Te Rito & Healy, 2010). Collaborative frameworks that braid Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledges can provide valuable insights into understanding and responding to sustainability challenges (Denny et al., 2025; Pio & Waddock, 2021).

However, researchers should be vigilant about colonial legacies of extractive research practices when collaborating with Indigenous peoples. Non-Indigenous researchers who want to engage with Indigenous peoples and communities must be cautious of the risks of reproducing (neo)colonial

structures and processes in collaborative projects (Banerjee, 2003; Shiva, 1993). Any attempt to build collaborative frameworks between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples must confront the legacies of colonialism and dispossession that have framed contemporary Indigenous realities (Banerjee & Arjaliès, 2021).

Research *with and for* (not *about*) Indigenous peoples requires decolonial approaches, exemplified by the principle advocated by Indigenous scholars: "*nothing about us without us*" (Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Weston & Imas, 2019). Decolonial methodologies challenge colonial extractive research practices that appropriate Indigenous knowledges without compensation and deny Indigenous intellectual property and cultural rights while prioritizing self-determination, ethical responsibility, collaboration and respect for Indigenous worldviews (L. Smith, 1999). They also challenge the dominance of Western[1] ways of knowing as the "universal" or "objective" standard by recentering Indigenous and local knowledge systems. Decolonial methodologies also require researchers to develop "political reflexivity" (Abdelnour & Abu Moghli, 2021), which involves a critical awareness of their colonial positionalities and an understanding of the risks of appropriating or marginalizing Indigenous knowledges (Grosfoguel, 2007).

Respectful collaboration with Indigenous peoples also involves creating a "third epistemological space" (Seremani & Clegg, 2016) in which Indigenous and Western forms of knowledge are integrated ethically and in a mutually beneficial way. While these spaces may help redress the epistemological violence committed against Indigenous peoples, not much is known about how they should be

[1] We acknowledge the problematic homogenizing assumptions of terms like the "West" and "East" or "non-West." We use the term "West" to refer to a geographical location and a discursive space, a set of positionalities embedded in a network of economic and power relations that produce material and discursive effects. Thus, Indigenous communities located in Canada and the United States, for example (geographically the "West"), also distinguish between "Western" and Indigenous ways of knowing.

constructed, who should be involved, the power dynamics and underlying tensions between stakeholders, rightsholders and the expected outcomes of collaborative projects.

Our article addresses this research gap by proposing a Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk methodology that offers an inclusive, culturally sensitive approach by integrating the best of both Indigenous and Western perspectives (Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall, 2012). This decolonial methodology creates a third epistemological space (Seremani & Clegg, 2016) between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, fostering a more inclusive and comprehensive research landscape that is reflective of and responsive to multiple worldviews and experiences (Doucette, 2025).

Our contribution is threefold. Firstly, we offer a detailed account of the Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk methodology, which complements both Indigenous and Western methodologies. Secondly, we propose a framework for Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk collaborations, which we refer to as *territory-based*, *team-based*, *Nation-based,* and *Indigenous collective-based*. These nuanced approaches provide critical insights for researchers interested in adopting Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk, while emphasizing the importance of recognizing Indigenous knowledge holders and academic researchers as equal partners in knowledge production. Finally, we share our learnings from a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project that mobilized a *territory-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk* methodology. Together, those contributions call for acknowledging and addressing the exclusion of alternative epistemologies, such as Indigenous ones.

While Indigenous knowledge systems share certain core principles, Indigenous experiences and epistemologies are inherently diverse across nations, communities, and individuals (Salmon et al., 2023). Our methodological approach acknowledges this diversity by centering relational accountability

and recognizing that what constitutes ethical research practice must emerge from the specific relationships, contexts, and protocols of the Indigenous communities and collaborators involved, rather than applying a monolithic understanding of "Indigenous methodology." This paper reflects our experience and does not purport to represent all Indigenous peoples or academic experiences working with them.

Positionality Statement

Positionality statements have been increasingly criticized for being largely symbolic, as they merely acknowledge researchers' identities without analyzing how their position actively informs the research process, methodologies, or conclusions (Bell, 2020; Savolainen, Casey, McBrayer, & Schwerdtle, 2023). However, positionalities are key to decolonial approaches, as they enable engagement with colonial power dynamics in knowledge production, both at the structural level and through the biographies of those who produce knowledge (Grosfoguel, 2007). As we will show later, researchers' positionality is crucial to Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk (Bartlett et al., 2012), particularly from a methodological perspective.

The first author, Diane-Laure Arjaliès, is an academic researcher, a White woman. She was born in France and immigrated to Canada with her immediate family in 2015. She became a dual citizen in 2022 and identifies as a French and a French-Canadian. Since 2017, she has been working with the *Onyota'á:ka* ("Oneida"), *Bkejwanong* ("Walpole Island"), and *Deshkaan Ziibing Anishinaabeg* ("Chippewas of the Thames") nations, located in Southern Ontario. She has been working for several years with the Indigenous Leadership Director and Indigenous Knowledge holder (and third author), Sam Whiteye, on the design of a Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk Conservation Impact Bond (CIB).

The second author, Julie Bernard, is an academic researcher and a White woman from Canada. She is of Scottish and French descent. From a young age, she was privileged to be introduced to the Nation Huronne-Wendat cultural heritage. She has been working with *Onyota'á:ka* ("Oneida"), *Deshkaan Ziibing Anishinaabeg* ("Chippewas of the Thames"), and the Indigenous Knowledge holder, Sam Whiteye, since joining the first author's lab in 2020. Since she started working on collaborative research projects with local and Indigenous communities, she has reconnected with her feminist roots and deepened her comprehension of the complexities of care within these collaborative frameworks.

The third author, Sam Whiteye, is an Indigenous knowledge holder, a female community leader from *Eelūnapéewi Lahkéewiit* (Canada), dedicated to her work with Indigenous Communities in Southern Ontario. Her grassroots experience enables her to utilize her lived experience and understanding to create ethical spaces and lead conversations centring on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission[2]. Following an ethical, Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk approach, she is a changemaker in the environmental and conservation sectors.

The fourth author, Bobby Banerjee, is an academic researcher, a male of South Asian origin, born and raised in a former colony, educated in colonial institutions. He received his higher education in the United States and has worked at universities in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. He has extensive experience working with Indigenous communities. He is acutely aware that, given

[2] Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was established in 2008 as part of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. Its primary goal was to uncover the truth about the impacts of the residential school system, where Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and subjected to systemic abuse and cultural assimilation. The TRC documented survivor testimonies, issued 94 Calls to Action to address the ongoing legacy of colonialism, and promoted reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. Its work has been a cornerstone for fostering awareness and advancing Indigenous rights and justice in the country. More information is available at https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1450124405592/1529106060525.

his class and caste privileges, his experiences of colonialism are vastly different from Indigenous experiences of colonialism.

Our Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk Methodological Journey

> You cannot necessarily show in a colonial writing way, from what an Indigenous practitioner is, because, especially from an Indigenous lens, our knowledge is not just like information or traditions. It is a practical component in which I participate. It is songs. It is ceremonies. It is time out on the land. How can you include those experiences in a written form in a paper that does not exist? That is colonial in itself. (Sam, 2025)

As the above quote illustrates, there is an inherent contradiction in writing an academic article rooted in Western modes of knowledge production and sharing, while engaging with Indigenous peoples through the lens of Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk (Bartlett et al., 2012). This article cannot account for the land's teachings, songs, and ceremonies, all of which are essential to Indigenous knowledges. Additionally, three of the authors are non-Indigenous, which mirrors the persistent underrepresentation of Indigenous scholars in (Canadian) universities. This disparity stands in stark contrast to Indigenous peoples' significant presence and contributions to (Canadian) society. Given this institutional imbalance, how can a research project meaningfully integrate both Indigenous and Western perspectives when the research team itself reflects these systemic inequities? This article aims to provide answers to the critical question of research methodology and ethical practice within colonial academic structures.

In this research project, the Western eye followed Western research canons, with three non-Indigenous academic researchers, trained in Western research methods, drawing on community-based participatory research (CBPR) to develop a Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmunk Conservation Impact Bond (CIB). The Indigenous eye was represented by an Indigenous knowledge holder, who serves as the Indigenous Leadership Director of the Carolinian Canada Coalition, the primary partner

organization in our research project (i.e., Sam, the third author). Knowledge holders are respected members of Indigenous communities who safeguard and transmit Indigenous knowledge. They are recognized for their wisdom, lived experience, and ability to share teachings in ways that honour and align with cultural protocols (Kovach, 2010; Young, 2024). Sam's knowledge stems from the teachings shared by her ancestors and the land, as well as her lived experiences.

While the Indigenous co-author is not an academic and does not require academic publications to advance her career, her inclusion in the authorship team was not tokenistic; instead, it reflected her knowledge and experience of her land. She was closely involved in the project's conceptualization and implementation and played a key role in developing the methodology and applying it in practice through the project we collaborated on. The Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmunk approach we followed reflected both Western and Indigenous traditions of knowledge creation, using the best of both eyes. The three Western-trained academics took on the responsibility of writing sections of the paper, which we then discussed with the Indigenous co-author, along with the reviews we received. She read the drafts and reviewers' comments and offered her views on whether our description accurately represented the points she had made during our discussions. This approach created an ethical space that enabled the Indigenous co-author to participate in the research process in ways that respected her oral tradition.

> And so, the fact that we have science to support us in that decision-making process is an added benefit to our communities, but I still feel very much that the way we share information is still done through an oral methodology. And why should that be invalidated by a colonial institution because it is not written down? And I mean for me, that is just the best way that I happen to work, because I speak clearly and I am able to think better, giving it in an oral way rather than formulating it in an in a Western colonial way, trying to articulate my thoughts in a language that should not be my first language. (Sam, 2025)

It is crucial to acknowledge that embracing Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk (Bartlett et al., 2012) means recognizing Indigenous knowledge holders as (co)researchers, even if they do not typically possess the credentials of Western researchers (e.g., Ph.D holders or affiliation with a university) (Denny et al., 2025), as explained below:

> What is the other eye? What is the Indigenous eye? And they said they kind of looked at me, and they were thinking about it. And I said, it is Indigenous knowledge, I said, but it is also songs, ceremonies, culture, relationships to land practices that you know on the Western side are never going to understand when it comes to land. So, who are you to try to judge or validate or say what is right when you only see out of the one eye, I have the other piece. You cannot discredit that. You cannot invalidate that connection. (Sam, 2025)

We agree with Indigenous scholars that Indigenous researchers and their methodologies must be included from the onset of the project as equals to Western researchers and their methodologies (L. T. Smith, 2021). We nevertheless believe that Indigenous knowledge holders and Indigenous land guardians should not need a Ph.D. or university affiliation to be considered Indigenous researchers. Those are Western credentials that can serve another form of colonization for Indigenous knowledge holders.

Through this collaboration and this article, we hope to encourage an alternative path towards decolonizing and Indigenizing our discipline (Bastien et al., 2023; Doucette, Gladstone, & Carter, 2021; Salmon et al., 2023). This call has often been made, but with little methodological guidance on how to achieve this (Cadman et al., 2024; Doucette, 2025; Grosfoguel, 2007). We aim to address this shortcoming by offering methodological insights into Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk (Bartlett et al., 2012) that can benefit both Indigenous peoples and allied learners. In the first half of the article, we outline the key features of the methodology and possible forms of collaborations (see Tables 1 and 2). We then reflect on our practical experience of implementing a *territory-based Two-Eyed*

Seeing/Etuaptmumk, outlining key implications for further research. We will use the term "academic researcher" to describe researchers who possess Western credentials (i.e., Ph.D. or university affiliation). This choice acknowledges that Indigenous knowledge holders and Indigenous land guardians (trained stewards—often referred to as "eyes and ears on the ground"—hired by Indigenous Nations to manage and protect their traditional lands, waters, and cultural sites) should be considered as co-researchers, even if they are not academics.

Indigenous Knowledges and the Need for New Epistemological Spaces

Research involving Indigenous peoples has been dominated by colonial modes of knowledge production relying solely on Western methodologies and epistemologies (Bastien et al., 2023; Bothello & Bonfim, 2023). Indigenous peoples generally do not benefit from knowledge derived from their lived experiences because extractive research practices generate reputational and material benefits for researchers and their institutions, but offer little of value to the communities from whom the knowledge is extracted (Bothello & Bonfim, 2023).

There is a growing recognition that Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples should collaborate to provide "mutually beneficial research that contributes to the socio-economic well-being and self-determination of Indigenous peoples." (Colbourne et al., 2020, p. 70) Such collaborations, however, are complex given the colonial legacies that shape Indigenous realities and require the "creation of intellectual and analytical spaces in which diverse epistemological positions can be appreciated to produce hybrid perspectives" through a "third epistemological space." (Seremani & Clegg, 2016, p. 176)

Our article addresses this gap by offering a range of collaboration forms, following the Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk methodology (Bartlett et al., 2012) and providing methodological guidance grounded in practical experience.

Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk: A Research Methodology Whose Time Has Come.

The concept of Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk is expressed through metaphors such as bridging, braiding, and weaving, representing the respectful integration of Indigenous and Western knowledge systems while maintaining the integrity of each (Kimmerer, 2013). Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk embodies a way of being, seeing, and living that equally values multiple perspectives and knowledge systems (Bartlett et al., 2012; Colbourne et al., 2020; Rowett, 2018). Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk was developed by Mi'kmaq elder Albert Marshall to make space for Indigenous perspectives, knowledges, and methodologies. It encourages all participants to embrace Indigenous and Western perspectives, mobilizing the best of both to benefit everyone (Doucette, 2025). As Marshall explains: "Go into a forest; you see the birch, maple, pine. Look underground, and all those trees are holding hands. We as people must do the same." (Iwama, Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2009, p. 3)

Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk fails when individuals focus only on "their eye." However, non-Indigenous peoples must not speak on behalf of Indigenous peoples. The Indigenous eye must originate with Indigenous partners and be shared ethically, in accordance with Indigenous protocols (Kovach, 2010). It is also essential for non-Indigenous partners to take responsibility for making the Indigenous eye visible. Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk also recognizes Indigenous rights to self-determination, influence, community rebuilding, and emancipation.

Ethical Space

To ensure that both perspectives are respected, partners in Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk must commit to an ethical space – a framework of engagement developed by Cree scholar Willie Ermine and Blackfoot Elder Dr. Reg Crowshoe in 2007. An ethical space promotes an environment where Indigenous and Western worldviews engage respectfully, fostering dialogue and mutual understanding without dominance. It requires transparent, honest, and authentic dialogue, as well as continuous nurturing (Arjaliès et al., 2025; Conservation through reconciliation partnership, 2023)

Creating and maintaining an ethical space can be challenging, as there is always the risk of power imbalances that could lead non-Indigenous partners to dominate the space. To achieve balance, non-Indigenous peoples must be mindful of the colonial context in which knowledge is often produced, where Western ways of knowing tend to dominate. They must learn their history and be sensitive to the potential injustices and privileges they bring to the collaboration. They must also actively shape the ethical space so that Indigenous peoples can share their knowledge safely. This might mean adopting Indigenous rather than Western protocols when sharing knowledge (e.g., storytelling, circles of sharing, smudging[3]).

Table 1 summarizes the key elements of Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk. The positioning of Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk between dominant Western and Indigenous methodologies is a heuristic device – we acknowledge that there are no purely Western or Indigenous knowledge holders (Little Bear, 2011).

[3] Smudging is a traditional Indigenous practice used in various ceremonies and daily life across many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit cultures in North America. It involves the burning of sacred medicines, such as sage, sweetgrass, cedar, or tobacco, to create smoke. Depending on which plants are used, smudging has different intentions. Some medicines cleanse, some invite in, some are believed to strengthen the ceremonies or prayers, some are used for better communication with the spirit world.

----------INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE ----------

The Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk methodology can mobilize a wide range of qualitative methods. Some methods are commonly used in Western research, such as interviews, observations, and surveys. Researchers have also employed methods more aligned with Indigenous protocols. For example, Aussant et al. (2023) used sharing circles, a format in which participants gather in a circle to discuss and connect, fostering trust, intimacy, a sense of belonging, mutuality, and reciprocity. Baker et al. (2023) suggested that Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners engage in listening and storytelling while walking on the land, enabling non-Indigenous participants to experience the deep connection between place and time. The relationships between Indigenous peoples and the land are complex and specific to each community (Kimmerer, 2013, 2024). Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk is a relational and land-based methodology that must embrace such relationships. As Sam explained:

> For us, an Indigenous peoples, it goes back to our understandings of Natural Law, our responsibilities of upholding our original instructions and the very first treaty we made with creation. Among my people, the Lunaape, our creation story tells how we, as human beings, sit among creation and within its order; we were created last. In my Nation's creation story, in fact, it is said that the animal and plant nations did not want us here because they knew we were going to get the gift of free will – the choice to decide how to conduct ourselves, and they feared we were just going to come into being and just take and take. So the Creator assured them they would give us what we call our original instructions – the ways we must conduct ourselves, and from my Nation, those laws were simple – Kindness, Honesty, Respect and Sharing. In return, creation would teach us how to live among them, offering, in many cases, their lives for us to exist, but this relationship would be reciprocal. This was the very first treaty that we made, it was with Creation. We would uphold this responsibility and always give thanks to creation for its lives and for its continuity. This is Natural Law, woven into everything, especially our languages. We say that our languages have spirit. They have intention; they hold placemaking, relationships, identity, and instructions, and are intrinsically tied to the land and to our place here in this world. Indigenous knowledge draws on our understandings of natural law while upholding our governance, protocols, responsibility and accountability with creation and the land. This is the foundation of who we are as a people. It has been woven into our blood memory since our creation: how to be with the land, how we use the plants, how we know and track the seasons and the stars, how we take our cues from the animals, and where to find them. How we

> travelled and moved across the land. All of this knowledge was given to us by creation, and so land is our source of knowledge; therefore, Indigenous knowledge is invaluable and must be passed down from one generation to the next to ensure the continuity of that responsibility in stewardship and cultural practices. This ensures that it stays place-based and rooted in the land and identities of Indigenous Peoples. (2026)

Pérez Piñán et al. (2022) used the "Making Connections" method, a practical approach rooted in the work of the political philosopher James Tully (2000), further developed by Friedland and Cree scholar Val Napoleon (2014). This method provides a framework for cooperative, community-based discussions supporting place-based and people-centred economic development visions. People involved in Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk can decide which methods are best suited to their project in collaboration with the Indigenous peoples involved; however, positivist methods would be ruled out because their epistemological and ontological assumptions are incompatible with Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk. Since Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk is grounded in relationships, it is embedded in interpretative and narrative onto-epistemologies (Garud & Gehman, 2019).

Emergent Frameworks for Collaborative Engagement Based on a Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk Methodology

Table 2 describes forms of collaboration following a Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk methodology, which we refer to as *territory-based*, *team-based*, *Nation-based*, and *Indigenous collective-based*. Those forms of collaboration are informed by analyzing our practical experience with the territory-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk methodology and comparing it to previous empirical research (e.g., Baker et al., 2023; Colbourne et al., 2020; Murphy, Danis, & Mack, 2020; Pérez Piñán et al., 2022; Sanchez-Pimienta et al., 2021).

These ideal types serve as a heuristic device, intended to provide methodological guidance rather than serve as a checklist. Research projects might exhibit features of the different approaches outlined in the table. Research projects can also evolve. For instance, our collaboration started as a Nation-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk before evolving into a territory-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk. We have developed this list of collaborative approaches for academic researchers operating in Western contexts, acknowledging the risks of imposing a Western structure on Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk, a holistic, relational, and land-based methodology.

To offer alternative accounts of Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk, we asked an Indigenous artist with whom we worked to represent and share with us what Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk meant to her (See Figure 1). Visuals are essential to Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmunk (Doucette, 2025, p. 146), as is the sharing of Indigenous knowledge. We also included a collage of relationships built through our engagement with Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk to illustrate the relationality embodied in the methodology (see Figure 2).

----------INSERT FIGURES 1 AND 2 ABOUT HERE----------

Our forms of collaboration are based on the North American context, particularly in Canada. Further research is needed to understand how effectively these forms of collaboration can be applied in other regions, including Central and South America, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Asia. There can be significant differences in protocols, languages, and knowledge systems among various Indigenous Nations, communities, and peoples.

----------INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE----------

Territory-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk

In territory-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk, the collaboration's core focus is the territory where the research unfolds. The Indigenous eye(s) come from the Indigenous Nation(s) and Indigenous steward(s) of this territory, who are partners in the collaborative research project, primarily through the Indigenous knowledge holders chosen by the communities. The ethical space requires navigating the protocols and relationships of multiple Indigenous Nations and partners within a shared territory. All partners must agree on the Indigenous protocols (e.g., opening circles) to be followed during the project. In addition, academic researchers need to understand the histories of the different Nations and partners, their languages, and the specific protocols for respectful engagement. Consequently, the researchers must have a close relationship with the territory (ideally by living there) – the research team cannot consist solely of visiting researchers who fly in and out to conduct research.

In territory-based Two-Eyed Seeing /Etuaptmumk, the researcher's university's existing ties and commitments to the specific territory and Indigenous Nations can significantly impact how the research is conducted and received (assuming the university is on the territory). The researchers must be accountable to both the university and the Indigenous Nations (e.g., by respecting land agreements such as treaties), which can create tensions, as we will discuss later.

The key determinant of territory-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk is the relationship between partners and the territory in which research unfolds. Yet defining these relationships and their influence on the research process is challenging. Should all partners have lived in a location for a specific period to claim a land relationship? For how long, and who decides? What if the relationship to the land stems from stories rather than direct experience? What about Indigenous community

members who are also university employees? The context will specify the criteria for an appropriate relationship. However, it is essential to understand the colonial legacies that underlie contemporary relationships between research participants, the land, and the research team.

Team-Based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmunk

Team-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk's Indigenous eye(s) is provided by the Indigenous academic researchers who are members of the research team. Indigenous academic researchers bring their diverse Indigenous backgrounds and perspectives, while non-Indigenous academic researchers share their Western forms of knowledge. Ethical space is often easier to establish and maintain since it is created within the research team, which has established ethics protocols. One example of team-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk research is the use of introspective methods, including semi-structured interviews within the research team, a team-sharing circle, and collaborative reflection and writing (Sanchez-Pimienta et al., 2021).

While team-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk may not require the same level of personal relationships with a specific land as in territory-based approaches (i.e., Indigenous academic researchers can come from different territories), the research team members still need to center land and Indigenous protocols in their work. Team-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk can be less challenging than Nation-based or Indigenous collective approaches, as the team has more control over establishing the ethical space and protocols within their group. However, even in team-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk, it is necessary to maintain relationships and seek guidance from appropriate Indigenous knowledge holders to ensure the work is carried out in respectful, culturally grounded ways (Sanchez-Pimienta et al., 2021).

Nation-Based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk

Nation-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk is centred around one Nation that embodies the Indigenous eye. One example is a partnership between an interdisciplinary team of university-based scholars and the Toquaht Nation, a Canadian First Nations community, to co-develop a socio-culturally sensitive decision support and monitoring system to evaluate entrepreneurial opportunities and to assess their economic, environmental, cultural, and community impacts (Murphy et al., 2020; Pérez Piñán et al., 2022). There are typically formalized protocols, governance structures, and leadership roles (such as Clan Mothers, Chiefs, and Councils) that academic researchers need to understand and engage in. The origins of Indigenous knowledge are more clearly defined, as they come directly from the Nation and its protocols. The ethical space is also more formalized, with established processes and pathways for engagement between academic researchers and the Nation. However, Nations can still face capacity issues, such as being overwhelmed by consultation requests, which can affect their ability to fully engage in the collaboration. Researchers and their universities do not necessarily need to be based in the Nation's traditional territory. If they live on the territory, some features of the territory-based approach will apply, notably the colonial legacies that underpin relationships between the university, the academic researchers, and the Nation, as well as any land agreement.

Indigenous Collective-Based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk

Indigenous collective-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk encompasses any Indigenous collective not linked to a specific territory, research team, or Nation. Indigenous collectives can range from organized collectives, such as Indigenous networks or organizations, to grassroots movements without formal governance structures, such as Indigenous members within a university (Aussant et al., 2023). Working with Indigenous collectives emphasizes the need for nuanced understanding, humility, and

centering of community leadership and self-determination (Bird-Naytowhow, Hatala, Pearl, Judge, & Sjoblom, 2017).

The protocols and ways of organizing within Indigenous collectives can be more fluid and less codified than in Nation-based contexts. This can make it more challenging for non-Indigenous academic researchers to navigate because the protocols and leadership structures of Indigenous collectives can vary significantly. There is a risk of non-Indigenous academic researchers or organizations trying to co-opt or dominate the space of Indigenous collectives. The ties between academic researchers and their universities, as well as the Indigenous collective, can be significant depending on preexisting relationships, such as when a university research team conducts research with Indigenous students on campus. For instance, Aussant et al. (2023) employed sharing circles to bring together students, faculty, and staff to discuss how the school can promote Indigenous allyship.

Each Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk research design is unique and should be recognized as such. The embeddedness of land in this methodology is crucial. The land is everything to Indigenous peoples: it is their teacher, their ancestors, their medicine, their food, among others. However, ways of engaging with the land vary across forms of collaboration, and specific Indigenous protocols may be developed according to the Indigenous stewardship in place. In a territory-based and a Nation-based approach, the land on which the partnership unfolds dictates the Indigenous protocols in place. In a team- or collective-based approach, Indigenous peoples may come from different territories, and their collaboration can affect those in multiple territories, some of which may not be their own. The importance of the relationships between the land and academic researchers explains why reflexivity on positionality is crucial, especially when it comes to representing the Indigenous eye.

Although Indigenous academic researchers are listed only in the team-based collaboration, as the origins of the Indigenous eye, we acknowledge that they are better suited than non-Indigenous academic researchers to pursuing Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk. Indeed, they share forms of knowledge and lived experiences that are more likely to foster trust and fruitful relationships with Indigenous communities. Based on our experience with *Territory-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk,* we nevertheless believe that the representative of the Indigenous eye must be a knowledge holder appointed or elected by the community and must be based in the territory where the research is being conducted. Such was the case in our project, where the Leadership Director of the Indigenous partner organization stewarded the Indigenous eye. Indigenous academic researchers from outside the community can also participate in Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk research projects and can bring valuable insights; however, given the focus on land, the Indigenous eye must be knowledgeable about the stories and ceremonies of the land where the project is being carried out, which implies that the person should belong to the communities involved in the research [except the team-based form of collaboration which is based on the individuals' knowledge]. Indigenous academic researchers cannot replace the knowledge holders entrusted by the territory, Nation, or collective, as the Indigenous Leadership Director explained below.

> The paper's point of view is that [the project] should have researchers from that area because they understand the nuances and connections to the land, rather than an outside researcher, even if they were Indigenous. Because if you are bringing in an external Indigenous researcher, it is not about cultural exchange. Then it is offensive to the [Indigenous] practitioners [knowledge holders] in that area, right? They should be brought in and utilized, as they would provide a deeper understanding of the Two-Eyed Seeing component, since they are from that territory. There are things about lands in other places I will never know, because again I am not from those traditional territories; they have that knowledge there, they have that blood memory, you cannot quantify that. Therefore, in this instance, you should still use local researchers and Indigenous practitioners because of those connections. (Sam, 2025)

Sharing our Learnings: Territory-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk in Practice

This article draws on our experience as partners in a community-based participatory research (CBPR) project based on a territory-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk approach. As part of the project, we also conducted interviews with all research assistants involved in the fieldwork (20, including onboarding and exit interviews) and with University officials (6 in total) from the Office of Indigenous Initiatives, the Research Office, and the Culture and Inclusion Team. Those insights helped us reflect on some of the experiences we share below.

This project aimed to create and replicate a Conservation Impact Bond (CIB) in Southwestern Ontario, Canada, involving Indigenous communities, investors, outcome payers, habitat growers, evaluators and researchers (Arjaliès & Banerjee, 2024; Deshkan Ziibi Conservation Impact Bond Leadership Team, 2021). The CIB aimed to fund biodiversity restoration and foster relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and the land through a pay-for-performance mechanism that incorporated both Indigenous and Western governance structures and impact metrics. The project attempted to adopt Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk in its conceptualization, design, implementation, data collection, analysis, and dissemination of findings. The Indigenous team, within the conservation organization that issues the CIB, represented the Nations and the Indigenous organizations involved in habitat restoration, serving as the Indigenous eye. The Indigenous Leadership Director (the third author – Sam) led this team. The other authors supported the CIB's development, particularly through a governance and impact measurement lens, and shared the research's findings.

Who are the researchers?

A Western colonial construct?

> Sam and I [Diane-Laure] co-teach the CIB to a class of Indigenous fellows and business school students. In the exercise, Indigenous fellows and students must play a particular stakeholder/rightsholder role. Two young Indigenous land guardians, habitat partners in the CIB, are tasked to speak on behalf of the researchers. They do not understand, "Who are those researchers? We [Indigenous land guardians] are the ones on the land, restoring the ecosystems and gathering the data. We are the researchers." (Field notes, Diane-Laure, 2024)

Who is classified as an (academic) researcher is based on Western academic norms. Sam was not considered a researcher by our research ethics board or by the journal's submission system, which required us to include a university affiliation. In the context of Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk, should a Ph.D. degree or a university affiliation—or, for that matter, Manuscript Central—dictate who qualifies as a researcher? Under what conditions could the Indigenous land guardians who do not possess doctoral qualifications be considered as researchers in our project? Our research protocols still distinguish between "researchers" and community partners with differential responsibilities and obligations. The role of Indigenous partners in research projects is often reduced to advisory work or to obtaining ethical approvals, without acknowledging the unique insights they can bring (Cadman et al., 2024). Both knowledge systems are equivalent in Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk, which implies that current university academic practices need to be changed accordingly.

> I always feel like when I enter this building [the business school], I have to show up a certain way to be taken seriously, even though, you know, culturally and from my Nations and circles, I am regarded as a respected leader and knowledge holder. But here it is a little different, you know. […] I have always felt that Western academic institutions pride themselves on their certifications and degrees, which are respectable. But sometimes, there is no place … they have not created space for valuing Indigenous knowledges and our traditional practices. Sometimes entering a space is awkward because … Sometimes, it feels like I am welcome. But sometimes it can feel like, *"What are your credentials to be here, or to teach us?"* You know, because I do not have a formal background. Yeah, it is based on the Western mindset. So, it feels like I have to put, you know, my best foot forward when I enter here. (Sam, 2024)

Modalities through which the land is included in the research.

> After a few years of working on the research project, our work became known in the region and on campus. Another Indigenous community approached us to see whether we could help them restore a piece of land owned by the university [where Diane-Laure and Julie were employed] that is adjacent to their home. The situation was highly complex. The university legally purchased the land (under Canadian law) a century ago, and the Astronomy Department used it before it was abandoned. However, this community, which moved to Canada in the 19th century, had previously bought this land from a neighbouring Indigenous community to form a settlement when they were expelled from the US. They claimed that the land still belonged to them because the person who sold it to the university lacked ownership rights. The land was also part of a treaty with another Indigenous community. We could not know who was "right" in their claims, as Indigenous oral histories conflicted with Canadian Western laws.
>
> The university's research ethics board approval required prioritizing community needs and respecting both oral history and Indigenous and Western laws equally. As university employees, we did not receive the university's clearance to access the land. Our university granted funding for the research project, but was not ready to let us work on their land (because ownership was being contested). According to Canadian laws ("Western" laws in the eyes of our Indigenous partners), accessing this land without the legal owner's permission constituted trespassing. As researchers, we had the academic freedom to engage with the community. Yet, as university employees, we could not represent or speak on behalf of the university. We were stuck in an impossible situation. If we followed Indigenous laws, we could engage with the community and the land, but we would conflict with the university's policy, which involves significant legal risks. If we followed "Western" laws and refused to engage, we would not respect Indigenous laws and would contravene our ethics approval with Indigenous communities. To this day, we continue to engage constructively with all stakeholders and rightsholders involved in the project, utilizing the research as a platform for collaboration. (Field Notes, Diane-Laure and Julie, 2024)

Researchers cannot escape the colonial legacies of their universities, which are part of the territory on which the research unfolds. In our case, this led to an impossible situation in which the academic researchers were forced to either contravene their research ethics board protocols or the terms of their contracts as university employees. It also led the Dean of the Business School, as "chief" of the first and the second author, to speak to the Chief of a partnering Nation on the reserve. One would not typically expect a Dean to be involved in relationships with research partners. However, such

engagement is expected in a territory-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk project where the political and colonial ties between the universities in the territory and the Nations are dictated by the (lack of) agreements in place (e.g., treaties).

The key role of the land

There were constant tensions between Western land-ownership structures and Indigenous rights to govern their traditional territories. We aimed to bring the land to the core of our decisions and practices, but this was always a struggle. While all partners agreed that land regeneration was a central focus of the project, the land was still seen as "out there," a human priority of a non-human entity, that was not the foundation of every decision. Writing this article also fails to convey the experience of walking on the land, or what we mean when we say the land is alive despite our attempts to reflect on our relationships with it (see Figures 1 and 2). Other territory-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk projects were more successful in bringing the importance of the land to the forefront. For instance, Baker et al. (2023) showed how engaging with the land as kin requires a continuous immersion in the land and its teachings. Unlike them, we were poorly equipped, both theoretically and methodologically, to engage with the land as kin. Sam concurred, commenting on a workshop we organized:

> It was very Westernized, as I did not feel the land was truly represented. Considering this project was centred around the land, how are we advocating and speaking on behalf of the land? Because that is the work that is going to happen out there. These people are supposed to come to the table to be, you know, technically to be the voices for that land to want better. And I did not feel that [...]. But it is usually Western folks, like you know, scientific folks or non-Indigenous folks organizing these events and then not understanding, you know, those cultural protocols, the ceremonial protocols to hold the space. And so you do not get the right outcomes. […] Non-Indigenous folks have their processes. Set up Zoom, create the agenda, and, you know, handle the housekeeping. Those are your protocols. Ours, you know, it might be … it might be exchanging of tobacco. It might be smudging. […] I have thought a lot about this: they always put us in a box where they think we go, so "Oh, an Indigenous person! You should do the land

> acknowledgment." No. No, we should not. First, that is not our protocol. Secondly, we acknowledge the land in some way, shape or form every day. You do not need to do a land acknowledgement. That is not for us. Right? (2024)

Representing the Indigenous eye

Expecting the few Indigenous partners to always "lead" the Indigenous eye was a very demanding task: simply attending meetings or providing feedback on research outcomes – performance metrics for the CIB and policy briefs – did not feel adequate, as we found that the Western perspective was dominant. This was also because Western individuals outnumbered Indigenous partners and team members. With the Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk approach, many partners felt it was their job to represent their own eye: non-Indigenous individuals representing the Western perspective, and Indigenous individuals representing the Indigenous perspective. This left all the Indigenous teaching to the few Indigenous people at the table. Requiring Indigenous peoples to not only teach non-Indigenous people about their history of colonization but also emotionally support the latter's guilt that comes with it did not create or maintain an ethical space for the Indigenous partners.

Additionally, the academic researchers sought to avoid overburdening Sam, as she was already overworked in her current role. As a result, the research team engaged more frequently with the non-Indigenous partners. Such an issue would have been prevented if the project had more Indigenous capacity, as seen in other Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk projects that were more Indigenous-led (see Sanchez-Pimienta et al., 2021). Sam explained:

> I now live and work here in London and in my community. If I am going out there, and you know I am a role model, I am in the public eye. And I am doing, you know, I am doing this or saying this, and it is not aligning with my community values back home. They will call me back and say, "You need to stop doing that." They would sit me down and say, we do not want you talking about that. We do not want you doing that, you know. It would be a big deal, and they have the right to do that because if I am going up there saying I am from that Nation, I am accountable to

> that Nation, right? And I think that is different than what the Western world understands because, from my experience, they have never been held accountable like that. And I remember going to one meeting where they were talking about how a board of directors should operate, and they were like, oh, well, do you bring yourself, or do you bring your organization to this board? And it is like, well, me as a person myself. I am this. I am my Nation. I am my clan, my family, and then I am tied to this piece of land here, right? Whereas if somebody else, you know, they are non-Indigenous there. Oh, this is my family, and that is it. And even in your story, you talked about who you were and your ancestors. So now you are thinking about your ancestors, thinking, "My ties are back to them." I am accountable for the decisions they made back then in this treaty that is enacted today, and I think a lot of non-Indigenous folks do not understand that until it is presented to them or they are held to that account. They are like, "Oh! A lot more than just me." (2024)

The presence of the Indigenous eye would probably have been less challenging in a team-based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk, where Indigenous academic researchers embody the Indigenous eye. It would also have probably been easier in a Nation-Based Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk, where one Nation, with its representatives, is empowered to make decisions. Lastly, having Indigenous academic researchers in the team would have certainly helped us address some of our shortcomings by bringing their knowledge to the research. However, it could also have exacerbated trust issues within the community. We struggled to accommodate the "pan-Indigeneity" of our research, which was linked to our territory-based approach. Each Indigenous community has its own unique culture and history. Accommodating the needs of different communities within a single research project and financial instrument remains challenging for implementing Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptumk through respectful engagement with diverse Indigenous knowledges.

Co-creation of the ethical space

Fighting to elevate Indigenous voices during our discussions

> Every pilot project for the CIB was co-created with all partners. We [the research team] were responsible for organizing the second co-creation pilot, which evaluated outcomes from the second phase and included a discussion of the selection of metrics for payment-by-outcome payers. The second co-creation session took place

at the end of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and was organized online, as were most activities during the second phase of the CIB.

We wanted to ensure that the co-creation session adhered to Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk principles by incorporating Indigenous perspectives into the evaluation metrics; this was the primary focus of the second co-creation session. We invited Sam to the workshop, and she agreed to lead the Indigenous discussion portion. We discussed our workshop with her in advance to ensure we would include her Indigenous perspectives during this session. We also emailed her our PowerPoint presentations and detailed agenda. We followed all the protocols required for Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk.

Unfortunately, Sam withdrew from the workshop at the last minute for medical reasons. She suggested approaching a member of the Indigenous team at the Carolinian Canada Coalition and a member of CIB's leadership team to take on this role. Given that this was an intra-organizational matter, we allowed the CIB coordinator (V) to contact the suggested Indigenous team member (Y). V, copied in all previous exchanges with Sam, thus had access to all our presentations and the information required for the workshop, and we believed he/she could brief Y accordingly.

However, we sensed something was amiss during the workshop: the Indigenous team member (Y) did not feel at ease, and we could not understand why. Our co-creation session did not unfold as planned, due to minimal engagement from the Indigenous members and other partners.

At the end of the session, we typically debriefed with some leadership team members who attended. Y asked to speak with us. Although Sam was unable to lead the workshop, she still attended and subsequently joined the debriefing session. Y confided in us that he/she felt catapulted into a meeting unprepared. We understood that a significant communication problem had occurred. We believed we had forwarded all the necessary information to V, who would then forward it to Y, enabling Y to participate fully in the workshop. We, along with most of the leadership team members who assured the organization of these co-creation sessions, assumed that, since Sam and Y were Indigenous members, they could do the job as we described. We did not engage in a trust-building process with Y or care enough about his/her safety. Sam was furious that we had put one of her team members in this situation, even though we felt we were not the ones who had put them there, since we had shared all the knowledge we had. She blamed us for being "Western" in our approach and not respecting Indigenous ways of communicating. We realized we led a co-creation session in a very business-school manner, assuming employees were interchangeable and using sophisticated online creative-mapping tools and numerous metrics. (Field Notes, Diane-Laure and Julie, 2024)

Although the incident above may appear to be a simple communication problem, it resulted from a lack of understanding of how relationships with Indigenous partners should be built and nurtured.

The researchers were focused on delivering their research outcomes and metrics. They believed they had done enough to implement Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk by engaging Sam. They should instead have focused on building trust with the Indigenous member V, so he/she could feel safe and prepared.

It took us time to build trust and work as partners, but our honesty and genuine desire to do better helped us progress towards Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk. Frustrated with the researcher-led workshop, Sam organized the subsequent workshop by centering the Indigenous eye. Sam explained:

> Definitely, with you, I feel confident, and as I said, I am grateful and confident in our relationship because I know you create space. You speak out, you advocate. You let Indigenous leadership take the lead they need to. So I do recognize that. And I see that. And that is … I think that is why we work together really great. But I mean, we have a really good relationship.

Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk requires investing years in relationship building because it is, first and foremost, a relational methodology.

From this experience, we understood that ethical spaces in Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk extend beyond traditional Western understandings of "ethics," creating a relational environment founded on respect, reciprocity, and mutual learning. Unlike fixed ethical codes or procedures, an ethical space is dynamic, shaped by the personal and collective histories and identities of those involved and evolving as they interact. As the ethical space in our research project evolved, each stage invited self-reflection, adaptation, personal growth and, at times, the unlearning of practices inherited from colonial norms.

Fighting to elevate Indigenous voices throughout the research process

Academic researchers encountered several difficulties in implementing Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptumk throughout the research process, including obtaining ethics approval and consent from partners, building trust, meeting the reporting requirements of grant funding bodies, and publishing the findings. Much effort was directed at "educating" our academic and administrative communities about the principles of Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk and the importance of understanding Indigenous relational systems. The Office of Indigenous Initiatives and the positions of Indigenous Research Officer and Director of Culture and Inclusion were established during our project, which proved to be highly beneficial.

Our experience with Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk contributed to several changes in the University's research ethics board approval process. Firstly, we were allowed to use oral consent from Indigenous community members, which was more culturally aligned with their societies, rather than signing written consent forms. Secondly, we could sign agreements with customary governance bodies, such as Clan Mothers – generally, the oldest woman in the clan, chosen for their cultural wisdom rather than as government-mandated representatives of First Nation communities, like the Chief and Council. Thirdly, despite the university's data ownership policy, we successfully ensured that the data collected on reserves remained the Nation's property[4].

[4] In Canada, there are typically two steps to a university ethics board approvals – one from the community and one from the university. In practice, ethics approval with the community is shared with the university and incorporated into our ethics process. Issues might arise if the community's requests do not align with the university's requests. In our case, we faced this issue with the data ownership. We had to discuss with the university to be sure the community's requests were met. We succeeded in doing so; both ethics were aligned. We did not find any research published on ethics approval processes at Canadian universities, so we cannot tell whether our occurrence was unique or not. We encourage further research on the matter.

We also encountered numerous challenges arising from the University's research structures and processes. Any aspect of our work that fell outside the "standard" research protocol and required what they called "accommodation" for Indigenous partners or communities led to lengthy discussions, delays, and extensive paperwork, echoing difficulties faced by other research teams (Cadman et al., 2024; Denny et al., 2025). Although we were pleased to see our project prompting institutional changes, these adjustments also meant that specific colonial legacies and governance structures were imposed on Indigenous peoples and partners involved in our research. We felt that the restrictions imposed by our institutions did not always allow us to fully integrate the strengths of both perspectives, including the Western one.

Delivering "high-quality" research outcomes and outputs also posed problems. Our academic institutions prioritized publications in "top-ranked" journals. In contrast, our focus in the project was on producing outcomes that benefited Indigenous communities, such as land restoration and regeneration, and on producing reports that would enable them to access additional funding. We also collaborated with them as partner investigators in grant applications and facilitated engagement with universities and industry. "Success factors" for academic research did not include community benefits, such as enhanced access to funding or the creation and maintenance of an ethical space for Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk. Our academic colleagues were also skeptical of our work and doubted that "White" researchers could genuinely support Indigenous communities. Unless an Indigenous co-author stated otherwise, most non-Indigenous academic researchers questioned our accounts of the project, assuming our research would "extract" knowledge from Indigenous partners without benefiting them. The irony lies in the academy's call to develop alternative paths to engage Indigenous peoples, while its own structures denied the possibility of creating them.

Despite those challenges, we persevered. At the end of a two-hour meeting during which we discussed the challenges of this methodology, we asked Sam why, despite all the difficulties, she was still interested in pursuing the work with us. She answered:

> One of the biggest reasons is that if people change now, I am kind of going through that change with them, however painful it might be at times. Then the generations coming behind me from the Indigenous side might not have to face some of the hardships that I have had to face regarding, you know, oppression or systemic racism, or you know, some of the, you know, microaggressions that I have experienced. They might not have to deal with that because people will already come to the table with an understanding of how to treat folks, create ethical spaces, and hold safe spaces. So, they will have better opportunities and experiences than I have had. So, it is kind of both ways for me. It is like, yes, I will educate you, but I am going to do that so that my people can come and have a better space.

Discussion

What lessons can we learn from our experience with Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk, and how can this approach inform research methodologies in various Indigenous contexts? Indigenous communities are diverse, ranging from rural to urban-based, and comprise entrepreneurs, lawyers, doctors, engineers, academics, teachers, health workers, construction workers, farmers, pastoralists, fisherfolk, artisans, and hunter-gatherers. We believe the principles of Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk can be applied across diverse Indigenous contexts because they offer a respectful, relational, and inclusive methodology that honours the distinctiveness of each knowledge system. It allows sufficient flexibility for communities to co-learn and co-create without diminishing the value of any one perspective. Moreover, regardless of the diversity of Indigenous contexts, it is essential to create an ethical space for respectful interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous partners, which Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk provides. Thus, Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk offers a more inclusive approach for researchers seeking to work with Indigenous communities, which differs from conventional participatory research methods in several ways. Below, we describe a normative

framework for developing a Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk methodology in different Indigenous contexts.

Firstly, Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk represents a *decolonial methodology* (Abdelnour, 2022) that explicitly recognizes the shared colonial histories of diverse Indigenous communities. Recognition involves understanding how colonial legacies inform contemporary social and economic relations, for example, how racism and whiteness affect the experiences of Indigenous entrepreneurs in urban contexts (Banerjee & Tedmanson, 2010), how colonial forms of development create conflicts over Indigenous land and resource rights in rural communities (Maher, Pedemonte-Rojas, Gálvez, & Banerjee, 2023) or how sustainability policies can become a form of "green colonialism" where meeting the clean energy needs of wealthier populations in the Global North comes at the expense of Indigenous communities in the Global South (Ergene, Banerjee, & Ergene, 2024). Decolonial methodologies challenge colonial research practices – for example, extractive research that appropriates Indigenous knowledge without compensation and denies Indigenous intellectual property and cultural rights – and emphasize self-determination, ethical responsibility, collaboration and respect for Indigenous worldviews (L. T. Smith, 1999). Decolonial methodologies also require "multi-epistemic literacy" (Kuokkanen, 2011) to facilitate respectful learning and a non-hierarchical dialogue between different epistemological traditions.

Decolonizing begins with an explicit problematization of the colonial basis of knowledge whereby only a Western knowing subject can (re)produce (hi)stories and knowledges about the Other. Considering Indigenous knowledge holders and academic researchers as equal partners in the production of knowledge is essential to Two-Eyed-Seeing/Etuaptmumk. Indigenous knowledge holders (including the Indigenous co-author of this article) may not be considered as academic

researchers as defined by the dominant scientific and political economic paradigm, which is also an outcome of colonialism. Knowledge production, especially in the social sciences and humanities, was governed by a self-generative epistemic position of ethical and political neutrality that sustains asymmetrical power/knowledge relations by providing the West with a flexible positional superiority (Said, 1994). Thus, for Indigenous communities, "scientific" knowledge that produced these categories and defined particular paths to development was not politically neutral but instead constitutive of colonial histories (Banerjee, 2022a).

Centering colonial legacies involves *historicizing contemporary problems* facing Indigenous communities, where history as "facts" is distinct from history as a lens through which we view the present (Suddaby, 2016). Historicizing can uncover blind spots in the field created by colonialism and point to non-Western histories that have been excluded or marginalized. For example, there are structural differences between colonialism and settler colonialism – the distinction between the colony and the metropolitan center is emphasized in postcolonial countries in Asia and Africa. In contrast, colonial relations between Indigenous populations and the settler colonies of Australia, Canada, Latin America, New Zealand and the United States are ongoing and unfinished, unlike in postcolonial countries that gained independence from their former colonial rulers (Banerjee, 2022a). Settler colonialism attempts to erase the difference between the colony and the metropolitan center—a hallmark of colonialism—by concealing the fact that settlement was also an invasion (Veracini, 2013). Therefore, any research project involving Indigenous communities should be embedded in local histories that privilege their political aspirations for decolonization (Abdelnour, 2022).

Secondly, Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk is a *methodology rather than a method*, by which we mean there is an explicit engagement with the epistemological and ontological assumptions of the research,

including assumptions about knowledge, reality and the relationship between the researcher and the research subject. Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk, when applied to other Indigenous contexts, requires flexibility, respect for local traditions, and a commitment to equity between knowledge systems (Doucette, 2025). The research is co-created with the community involved and is shaped by their unique worldviews, while drawing on the complementary strengths of Western methodologies. Engagement with alternative epistemologies involves understanding specific knowledge systems, traditions, and worldviews of the Indigenous group involved. Participation of local elders, knowledge holders, and community leaders is thus central to the research process. Embracing epistemological diversity extends beyond acknowledging different ways of knowing and involves using Indigenous knowledge frameworks to frame research questions, identify data-collection methods, and analyze and interpret data. For example, a CBPR project that seeks equitable benefits of a mining project on Indigenous lands using Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk will not focus on consultations on how economic benefits are shared but will ask fundamental questions about how Indigenous relational epistemologies and ontologies that view land as a living relative can determine what developmental projects are appropriate. A Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk framework centers on the epistemic privilege of Indigenous communities, assuming that they are uniquely qualified to articulate their problems, interests and political aspirations (Abdelnour, 2022).

Thirdly, implementing Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk requires incorporating *Indigenous governance structures* into the research design to ensure that community leaders and knowledge holders are engaged at every stage, from design to dissemination, to guide the process of integrating local knowledge systems with Western methods (Banerjee, 2018; Cadman et al., 2024; Denny et al., 2025). Indigenous governance structures prioritize relationships and reciprocity among people, between people and the land, and between the land and nonhumans, and these relationships must be embedded in research

partnerships. Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk research with Indigenous communities must also be *impactful,* meaning it should benefit them by advancing Indigenous self-determination rather than serving solely academic or institutional interests. Impact beyond academia necessarily involves non-academic end users of research: for example, the project described in our illustrative case study of the CIB was co-developed with non-academic end users, including Indigenous councils, environmental organizations, and investment firms.

Engaged scholarship and Indigenous allyship: A political methodology

Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk is a form of engaged scholarship (Shultz & Kajner, 2013; Van De Ven & Jing, 2012) because of its participatory approach to research and the inclusion of end users, sponsors, and practitioners to understand complex problems. However, a central feature of Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk is its inherently "political" approach to research and its activist research methodology, which rejects the notion of "neutral" research (Abdelnour & Abu Moghli, 2021; Jones, 2017). By "political," we mean power struggles and contestations among people or groups. Thus, in the context of land management projects, any engagement with Indigenous knowledges cannot be separated from the Indigenous community's claims to land rights, sovereignty, and self-determination (Coulthard, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012). This became evident when our project's aims contrasted with the university's "ownership" of land. Creating a third epistemological space through Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk requires political reflexivity that extends beyond methodological reflexivity. In addition to critically examining their own positionalities and epistemic privileges, researchers must also understand the political environment of their research setting and its implications for their work (Abdelnour & Abu Moghli, 2021).

Indigenous allyship. Indigenous allyship often refers to non-Indigenous researchers who support Indigenous peoples. However, the term "ally" or "allied learner" is not a self-proclaimed title for academic researchers – Indigenous peoples must decide who their non-Indigenous allies should be. Allies aim to use their privileges and power to help change unjust and inequitable systems and institutions (Brown & Ostrove, 2013; J. Smith, Puckett, & Simon, 2016) by establishing meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples. Little is known about the role of allyship, and our article is a first step towards such understanding and calls for further research to investigate such relationships (Aussant et al., 2023; J. Smith et al., 2016)

Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk goes beyond knowledge production and seeks meaningful and transformative change (Doucette, 2025). While engaged scholarship necessarily involves a critical perspective, critical research by itself is not necessarily engaged research if it does not include transformative change. Publishing the findings of a critical research study alone will not constitute engaged scholarship unless it is accompanied by changes in policy or practice (DeMeulenaere & Cann, 2013). Such an explicitly political approach sits uneasily within MOS research and may pose difficulties for researchers aiming to publish such work in our leading journals. However, our article demonstrates that political reflexivity and engagement are crucial to creating alternative epistemological spaces and should, therefore, be acknowledged as key features of such methodological approaches. We encourage further research to investigate the modalities of such inclusion and its impacts on research practices.

The persistence of colonial relations. Our article also has implications for the administration and university protocols governing research projects involving Indigenous communities, particularly regarding the approval process by research ethics boards. Given the increasing attention to Indigenous issues in MOS research, there is a risk that Indigenous communities may become merely empirical settings for

applying "Western" theories (e.g., stakeholder theory and corporate social responsibility) (Banerjee, 2022b). University research ethics board protocols must include community benefits as a criterion for approving research projects. Additionally, for faculty members and university officials, the emotional labour of allied learners should not be underestimated. As our account indicates, the challenges to implementing Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk were numerous, with time and resource commitments significantly more onerous than those of traditional ethnographic research. In the fast-paced academic world of publishing in our allegedly top-ranked journals, it is unlikely that many papers will arise from Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk projects, which tend to be several years longer in duration than other projects.

Our article resonates with the concerns outlined by Amis and Silk (2008) regarding the challenges our "hyper-positivistic" discipline faces in achieving legitimacy. Prioritizing empirical and theoretical research over purposeful data collection has led to the "domestication" of qualitative methods (Howard-Grenville, 2021). Our article aims to reinvigorate the explanatory power of qualitative methodologies by unleashing their full disruptive potential (Cornelissen, 2017). Our holistic, relational and land-based methodology differs from extractive research paradigms that position Indigenous communities as subjects rather than knowledge co-creators and decision-makers. It challenges the hierarchical power dynamics typical in conventional research by centering Indigenous leadership and maintaining ongoing accountability through long-term relationships rather than transactional project-based engagement. The political reflexivity of a Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk approach and its focus on the emancipation of Indigenous communities can help overcome the "research extraction" problem prevalent in many local community studies (Bothello & Bonfim, 2023).

Conclusion

To conclude, we acknowledge the shortcomings inherent in our research and commit to amplifying the voices of Indigenous peoples. Our goal in this article has been to create an inclusive space for Indigenous knowledges and epistemologies. As Hamann et al. (2020) argue, every researcher is tied to colonial histories and must understand the impact of those legacies. By acknowledging our shortcomings and the institutional constraints within which research operates, we have attempted to equip colleagues with the necessary tools to engage with rightsholders and stakeholders in their respective institutions, fostering diverse ways of knowing, which is the basis of Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk. It underscores our collective role in the academic community to welcome and integrate Indigenous perspectives and researchers within our academic institutions.

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Table 1 – Comparison of Methodological Approaches (source: authors)

	Western Dominant Approaches	Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk	Indigenous Approaches
Definition	Based on "scientific" methods, empirical evidence, and formal education. It places a high value on written documentation and quantifiable data.	"Etuaptmumk is the gift of multiple perspectives ...it refers to learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing and from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing and to using both of these eyes together" (Bartlett et al., 2012, p. 335).	Knowledge is typically transmitted orally through stories, traditions, and lived experiences. It incorporates a deep understanding of the land, environment, and natural cycles. Respect for elders and land as knowledge-keepers, and ancestral wisdom is paramount.
Research Question	Driven by scientific inquiry. Researchers observe phenomena, identify knowledge gaps, and use systematic methods to explore them. Research questions follow SMART criteria: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time bound. Separation between observer and observed.	Intrinsically linked to the community's needs, necessitating an in-depth collective exploration to provide relevant insights. Research question is developed collectively with Indigenous partners.	The research question should emerge from the community's perspectives and concerns, based on lived experiences.
Positionality of Researcher (vis-à-vis the Communities and Academic Institutions)	Prioritizing individual achievements and autonomy. Success is often measured by personal accomplishments.	Acknowledging the privilege and influence conferred by our position within a Western institution, researchers actively strive to transcend conventional power dynamics, assuming the role of community allies, thus fostering an inclusive environment for various forms of knowledge creation.	Emphasis is on collective well-being and interconnectedness. Decisions are made considering the impact on the community and the environment. Researchers are typically Indigenous peoples from the community involved in the research.
Ontology	Separation thesis (nature & culture)	Relational ontology	Relational ontology
Relationships with the Land	Nature is often seen as a resource to be exploited for human benefit. It emphasizes control and mastery over the environment.	Inextricably intertwined with the research endeavor, the land stands as a pivotal entity, and its centrality is paramount when gauging the project's achievements, with implications that resonate deeply both within the researcher's perspective and the broader community's perception.	More harmonious and reciprocal relationship with nature, recognizing the importance of preserving the environment for future generations. Land is used for multiple purposes including cultural and spiritual ceremonies. Land is respected as a living entity and as kin.
Accountability	Accountability in the Western context is often formalized through contracts, agreements, and governance structures. For instance, corporate accountability may involve public reporting, audits, and compliance with industry standards.	Researchers need to navigate their relationship with the individual participants, the community, the land, and the institution. Researchers acknowledge the entanglement of relationships and are accountable to these relationships throughout the research process.	Indigenous accountability centers on community well-being. Actions impacting the community, land, or resources are communal responsibilities. Elders and knowledge-keepers guide, help resolve conflicts, and uphold cultural values.

	Western Dominant Approaches	Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk	Indigenous Approaches
Ethics process and Data Sovereignty	Done through the university's ethics committee and all the data collected and subsequent publications belong to the university.	Honours the community's authority structure. Researchers seek ethics approval from both the University's Ethics Committee(s) and the community. All collected data is returned to the community, upholding data sovereignty.	Respects cultural protocols, seeks consent, and protects Indigenous intellectual property rights. Ethical principles prioritize well-being, autonomy, and avoiding harm or stereotypes. The ethics approval is done at the community level. Data belongs to the community.
Data Collection & Production	Emphasis on the use of empirical methods, often through controlled experiments, surveys, and quantitative measurements, although qualitative approaches are increasingly recognized. It often centers on individual responses or behaviors, seeking to isolate and measure specific variables of interest.	Rooted in mutual respect and trust. Includes methods such as storytelling, interviews, and journaling. Goes beyond participant observation to observant participation. Creation of ethical spaces to allow both eyes to produce knowledge.	Rooted in stories, narratives, and lived experiences. These methods honour the richness and complexity of knowledge within the cultural context. They emphasize the active involvement and participation of the community, fostering a sense of ownership and empowerment.
Data Analysis	Goal of objectivity, attempting to minimize bias and personal beliefs. It often involves breaking down complex phenomena into smaller, manageable components for analysis. It aims to remain objective and impartial, following standardized procedures to avoid bias.	Emphasis on reflexivity. Community members are invited to contribute their perspectives and validate the researchers' interpretations.	Emphasis on narrative and storytelling techniques, ceremonies, experiential learning, recognizing the significance of personal experiences and local knowledge. It is often embedded in the cultural context, considering the community's values and perspectives.
Criteria for Research Quality	Emphasis on rigour, validity, and replicability. It employs systematic and objective methodologies with transparent documentation. A hallmark of high-quality research in the Western context is the ability to replicate the study's results, through transparent and well-documented research methods and procedures.	Beyond Western ideal of rigour. Research is evaluated on its ability to integrate diverse perspectives and worldviews and uphold ethical space. Quality research prioritizes community needs, establishing a reciprocal relationship respecting cultural, spiritual, and intellectual practices.	Highlights the relevance to the needs and priorities of the community. Inclusivity ensures that different voices and perspectives are considered and respected. It recognizes and values Indigenous knowledge systems and integrates them into the research process and findings.
Dissimination of Knowledge(s)	Heavily relies on written documentation, academic journals, books, and formal publications. The emphasis is on providing detailed and structured information, often supported by empirical evidence and data.	Goal of knowledge dissemination is direct benefit to the community. Researchers facilitate a dynamic and participatory flow of information throughout the research process, including methods like storytelling, workshops, and community events.	Transmission through oral tradition, storytelling, and intergenerational sharing. It is a communal, inclusive process that emphasizes interconnectedness. Academic articles are often published in Indigenous journals.
Research Outcomes	Academic papers Community improvement (varies, depending on the approach)	Community improvement Academic papers Policy briefs, government commissioned reports, think-tanks Knowledge-sharing with community	Community improvement Academic papers (focused on Indigenous journals) Knowledge-sharing with community Indigenous empowerment: findings shared with Indigenous communities

Table 2: Emergent Frameworks for Collaborative Engagement Based on a Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk Methodology

	Territory-based	Team-based	Nation-based	Indigenous Collective-based
Who are the (academic) researchers?	-Comprises Indigenous or non-Indigenous (academic) researchers. -Field researchers should preferably live on the territory.	Comprises Indigenous and non-Indigenous (academic) researchers.	-Comprises Indigenous or non-Indigenous (academic) researchers. -Field researchers should preferably live on the territory.	Comprises Indigenous or non-Indigenous (academic) researchers.
Modalities through which the land is included in the research.	The land is centred in all the relationships within the collaboration both through individual practices (e.g., smudging, walks, personal sharing) but also through respect of the Indigenous protocols and agreements between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples on the specific territory (e.g., treaties).	The land is brought forward by the team members within their exchanges (e.g., smudging, personal sharing of seasons, walks, team members' Indigenous protocols)	The land is brought forward by the Nation through its Indigenous protocols.	-The Indigenous collective can be part of a territory on which the researchers live. If so, local land agreements apply to the academic researchers and their universities (e.g., treaties). -If the Indigenous collective comprises Indigenous peoples from Nations outside the territory, then the ways the land is brought forward would vary depending on the collective's practices.
Representation of the Indigenous "eye"	Indigenous knowledge holders that are part of the territory and the collaboration.	Indigenous (academic) researchers – team members.	Indigenous knowledge holders, members of the Nation where the research unfolds.	The Indigenous collective's knowledge holders involved in the collaboration.
Co-creation of the ethical space	The ethical space is co-created by the researchers, Indigenous and non-Indigenous research partners and Nations, with representatives of each organization/Nation involved in the collaboration.	The ethical space is co-created by the team members.	The ethical space follows the Nation's Indigenous laws and protocols.	The ethical space is tailored to each Indigenous collective.
Examples	Carolinian Conservation Impact Bond (this article) Baker et al. (2023)	Sanchez-Pimienta et al. (2021)	Murphy et al. (2020) Pérez Piñán et al. (2022)	Aussant et al. (2023) Bird-Naytowhow et al. (2017) Colbourne et al. (2020)

List of Figures

Figure 1: Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk (author: Liberty Wrightman)

"Zgin Jiinshin - Hold my Hand" by Liberty Wrightman (2025) – Commissioned piece for the article.

When I was asked to create an illustration about what Two-Eyed Seeing means based on the analogy of trees: "Go into a forest; you see the birch, maple, pine. Look underground, and all those trees are holding hands. We as people must do the same." (Iwama, Marshall, Marshall, & Bartlett, 2009, p. 3) I thought back to memories from my childhood when I would play outside, picking flowers and playing in puddles. I remember hearing the birds chirp and sing songs while perched on the telephone wire, and on especially hard days, I would sit outside and talk to them. In their songs, I thought I heard

them say my name, and it made me feel happier and more connected. But as I got older, I didn't go outside as often as I used to, and I didn't hear my name in those songs anymore. I used to think I was just being a kid with a wild imagination until I had conversations with my uncle. He would tell me about the breath of creation, that Creator created everything with a single breath that connects everything and everyone.

This memory, and my uncle's teachings, helped shape how I approached this illustration. I wanted to show that same connection between people and the natural world. In the drawing, the trees above ground represent distinct beings that bring their own gifts. They stand separately, yet below the surface, their roots intertwine and reach out to each other. Trees that have strong, deep roots are also often able to give water from deep in the earth to smaller root systems, which helps to create a healthy ecosystem. This is also reflected by the flowers and berry bush that are giving the deer energy and nutrients. This carries the teaching that while we all come from different walks of life, we are all deeply connected through the land, spirit, and shared responsibility to one another.

The glowing people underground are living extensions of the trees, personifying their energy and the interconnectedness they all share. The hazy, stippled style is used to blur the lines and creates a dreamy look that I often feel when it comes to Two-Eyed Seeing. It's not always clear, and when you can look with both eyes, you can understand the bigger picture. The floral border symbolizes balance and harmony and can also be seen as a window to an Indigenous perspective of Two-Eyed Seeing. The importance of viewing the world through both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing goes beyond paper, and is needed to navigate the world to bring unity to all walks of life.

Artist Description:

Liberty Wrightman is a 24-year-old artist from Walpole Island, Bkejwanong Territory who primarily does digital illustration, mixed media and acrylic paintings to create art that combines traditional styles with contemporary techniques. As a fourth-generation residential school survivor, Liberty's art aims to highlight Indigenous resiliency, strength, and beauty while incorporating elements of herself and her community.

Instagram: libbiew.art
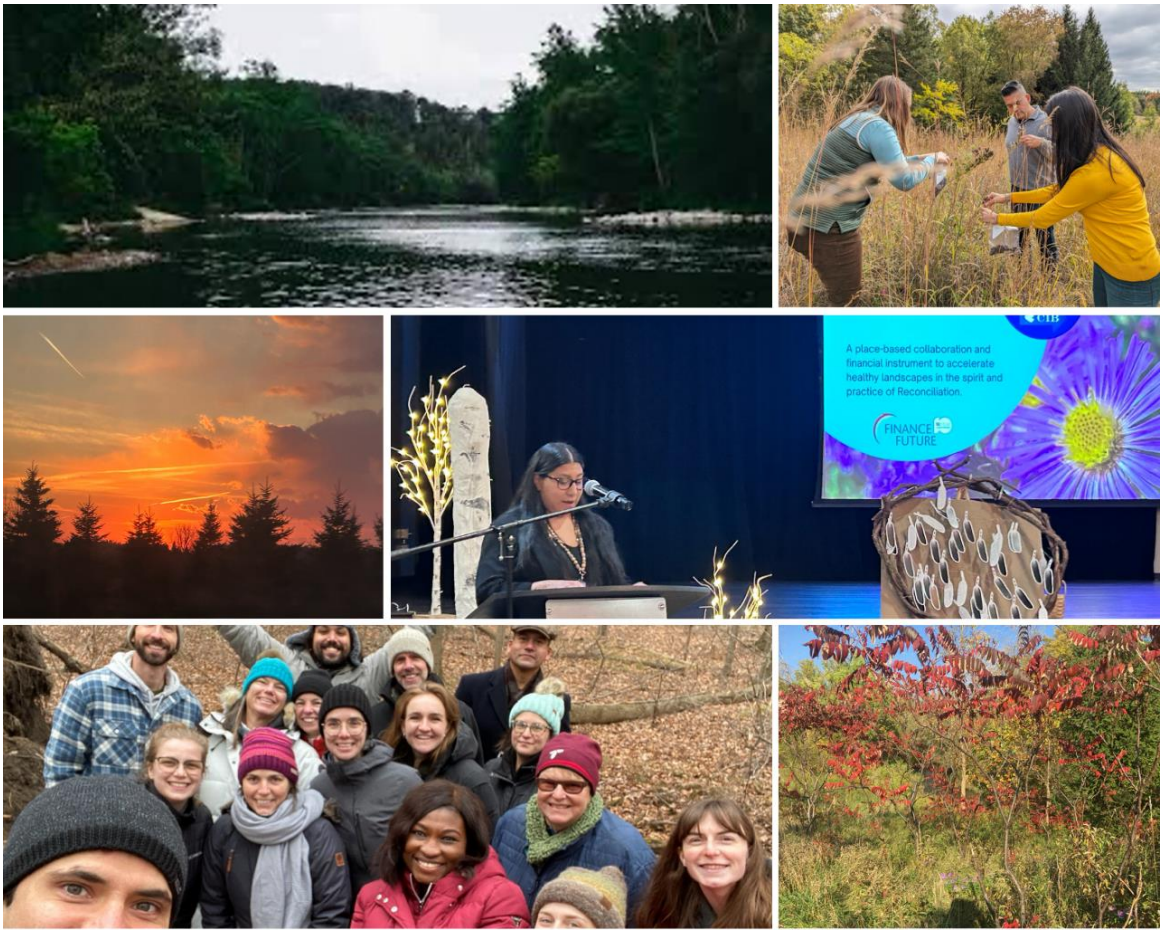
Figure 2: Photos of the relationships supported through Two-Eyed Seeing/Etuaptmumk (source: Diane-Laure Arjaliès, Julie Bernard, Sam Whiteye and the Carolinian Canada Coalition)