“I Got to Know Them in a New Way”: Rela(y/t)ing Rhizomes and Community-Based Knowledge (Brokers’) Transformation of Western and Indigenous Knowledge

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Abstract

Drawing on three culturally specific research projects, this paper examines how community-based knowledge brokers’ engagement in brokering knowledge shaped the projects’ processes. Informed by Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) conceptualization of the “rhizome,” we discuss how community knowledge brokers’ engagement in open research-creation practices embrace the relational foundation of Indigenous research paradigms in contrast to mainstream Western research practices that are engaged as linear, objective, and outcome-oriented activities. In turn, we offer propositions for building team environments where open research-creation practices can unfold, informing a periphery of shared space for Indigenous and Western paradigms.

Keywords

indigenous approaches to knowledge; ethnicity and race; methods of inquiry; decolonizing the academy; pedagogy; non-Western epistemologies

“The human capacity to develop is infinite.”

—Elder Campbell Papequash, 2012

Introduction

In a number of locations, including Canada, Western¹ research has been used as a tool of colonization, constructing Indigenous peoples² as inferior and rendering invisible the

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¹Our use of the terms “Western” and “Indigenous” paradigms are not meant to homogenize these knowledge systems. Although “Western” paradigms are multiple and diverse, within the remainder of this paper we use Western to refer to the dominant Western

successes of Indigenous science (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Walters et al., 2009). Indeed, Tuhiwai-Smith states that growing up in Indigenous communities:

... stories about research and particularly about researchers (the human carriers of research) were intertwined with stories about all other forms of colonization and injustice. These were cautionary tales where the surface story was not as important as the underlying examples of cultural protocols broken, values negated, small tests failed and key people ignored. The greater danger, however, was in the creeping policies that intruded into every aspect of our lives, legitimated by research, informed more often by ideology. (p. 3)

This relationship between colonizing ideology, research, and policy is deeply entrenched in Canadian history. One example of this entrenchment can be seen in the ever-persistent colonial “firewater myth.” Since early ethnographers began “documenting” Indigenous peoples culture and way of life on Turtle Island (or North America), researchers have generally accepted the problematic framing that Indigenous people have a homogeneous alcohol consumption “style,” and this is inherently different from (and more problematic than) the consumption behaviors of White-settlers (Waldram, 2004). This articulation of “inherent difference” is a colonial articulation of difference.

This sort of articulation regarding “inherent” difference in research helped justify the policy prohibitions on drinking alcohol for (and selling alcohol to) First Nations people who had Indian status; first under the 1869 *Act for the Gradual Enfranchisement of Indians* and later under the various versions of the *Indian Act*, until restrictions were gradually removed during the late 20th century. Similar assumptions are found in Davin’s ethnographically approached and federally funded *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Halfbreeds* (1879). The recommendations of this report led to the federal commitment to Residential Schools, which aimed to “civilize” First Nations children to advance the “race,” which according to Davin was in its “childhood.” Furthermore, the history of problematic research practices influencing policy development involves not only what is researched and articulated but also that which is not.

Until the early 1980s, there was very little research exploring the impacts of cross-cultural adoptions on Indigenous children in North America (Bagley, 1991). This is particularly concerning since after 1951 changes to the *Indian Act* extended provincial child welfare services to First Nations families living on reserves what was later termed the “sixties scoop” ensued. The “sixties scoop” was the widespread apprehension of First Nations children from their homes that were deemed unsuitable by White social workers’ standards and the placement of these children in White foster and adoptive homes that were often inferior (Bagley, 1991; Johnston, 1983). Very often the only “failings” of these children’s families’ of origin were poverty and Aboriginality (Fournier & Crey, 1997). The sole study

paradigm, post-positivism. Rather than claiming that there is one “Indigenous paradigm” or articulating a particular tribal approach (see Kovach, 2009, for an example of the latter), we use the term Indigenous paradigms to acknowledge that while Indigenous knowledge systems share similarities, they vary depending on Nation and community.

²This paper will use the terms “Indigenous” and “Aboriginal” when referring to Indigenous peoples of Canada, who are constitutionally recognized as “Indian, Inuit, and Métis peoples of Canada” (Constitution Act, 1982 s35). It will also use the term “Indigenous” when referring to Indigenous people in other parts of North America and internationally.

conducted in North America before the 1980s was “guardedly optimistic” (Fanshel, 1972). Fanshel (1972) only took into account the perspectives of parents (whom he interviewed) and made statements within his text, *Far From the Reservation*, a text that cannot be read as anything but colonialist with statements such as “one has to take the position that adoption has saved many of these children’s lives from utter ruination” (p. 339) that give voice to the Socially Darwinian assumptions affecting social work practice and policy during this time. These are the assumptions that made the “sixties scoop” possible. Similarly, in her analysis of popular and scientific discourse, Tait (2008b, 2009) reveals how during the 1980s and 1990s, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) became widely accepted within Canada as an “epidemic” of Indigenous communities, despite the gaps and methodological problems with the existing research. As Tait (2009) reveals, this construction of Indigenous communities as sites of dysfunction, alcoholism, and FASD is part of the movement from an “overt discourse about ‘civilizing’ of the minds and bodies of Aboriginal peoples” to “the ‘neutral’ language of science and medicine, with a focus on ‘inferior’ health . . . and social problems” (p. 199). This (mis)understanding of Aboriginal communities is linked to recent FAS prevention efforts which target Indigenous women’s bodies through *pregnancy prevention* including means such as “increased use of chemical contraception to permanent sterilization” (Tait, 2008b, p. 69). The examples provided above are by no means exhaustive, but are demonstrative of the relational interplay between colonial ideology, research practice, and policy directives.

In response to these and other problematic research projects and processes, there is an increasing dialogue within First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities and research institutions around different ways to ethically conduct research with Indigenous peoples. This exchange involves conversations around the usefulness of community-based, participatory, decolonizing, and Indigenous research approaches (Baydala, Placsko, Hampton, Bourassa, & McKay-McNabb, 2006; Broad, Boyer, & Chataway, 2006; Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada & Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, 2010; Dell et al., 2011; Kovach, 2009; Saul et al., 2008; Wilson, 2008). This paper is an effort to contribute to, and continue, this discussion.

Through mapping the experiences of community knowledge brokers on three related projects, we seek to increase understanding around how to work concurrently on the periphery of Western and Indigenous research paradigms. As a result of colonial processes rendering the successes of Indigenous knowledge and science invisible, mainstream researchers often (mis)understand Indigenous paradigms as devoid of science (Walters et al., 2009). This misunderstanding often informs discussions about “bringing together” Western and Indigenous ways of knowing. Instead, we acknowledge each of these knowledge systems as valid. We begin by situating Western post-positivism within a linear framework of thought and explore its incompatibility with relational Indigenous research paradigms. As well, we discuss the “push” to engage in a space between or within both of these paradigms when conducting research with Aboriginal communities. We draw on Western post-structuralists Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) concept of the “rhizome” to think toward working in the shared “space” on the periphery of Indigenous and Western paradigms. It is

fitting to do so, since Indigenous paradigms and the “rhizome” emphasize relationality, diversity, and multiplicity.

The paper then turns to the current understanding of knowledge brokers as transformers of knowledge and how community members are ideally positioned to do this based on their position in the project and relations within the community. Discussions with knowledge brokers on three projects relayed key ways in which the principle elements of rhizomatic thought are engaged with (although not named as such) and coincide with the relational foundation of Indigenous research paradigms. In turn, we offer propositions of how to foster environments where research-creation practices can unfold in the shared space, on the periphery of Indigenous and Western paradigms.

Post-Positivist and Indigenous Research Paradigms

Positivism was the dominant paradigm through which research was conceptualized in Western social science for nearly 400 years and has only been replaced by post-positivism since the 1960s (Giddings & Grant, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 2004). Post-positivism emerged in response to critiques leveled by poststructuralist, postmodernist, feminist, and Indigenous researchers (among others) toward the positivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2004; Lather, 1991). Similar to positivism, post-positivism supports that there is only one “truth”; however, it adds that due to the limits of “human intellectual mechanisms and the fundamentally intractable nature of phenomenon,” interpretations and representations of “reality” are imperfect and proximate at best (Guba & Lincoln, 2004, p. 25). Post-positivism remains dominant within social and health (or “soft”) sciences today, because it mimics (and thus, is assumed proximal to) the standard of research: the scientific method (or “hard”) sciences. This dominance is illustrated (and has been further ossified) by the recent evidence-based movement in health sciences, which privileges only certain research (random-controlled trials) as “valid” (Holmes, Murray, Perron, & Rail, 2006). Post-positivism (and evidence-based discourses) dominance within mainstream Euro–Western health informs research guidelines, practices, and processes, including funding application topics, requirements, and deadlines (Brown & Strega, 2005; Holmes et al., 2006). This governing paradigm continues to assume knowledge production and exchange is an objective, linear, and outcome-oriented process. This assumption is challenged by Indigenous research paradigms.

Indigenous research approaches are relational and wholistic,³ and accommodate multiple perspectives and circular processes (Kovach, 2009; Laliberte, 1997; Wilson, 2008). For example, since Indigenous epistemologies are indivisible from Indigenous spirituality and ceremony, spiritual and cultural practices are important aspects of Indigenous research (Kovach, 2009; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Indeed, Wilson (2008) and other Indigenous scholars conceptualize research as ceremony. Similarly, since storytelling is a traditional way by which knowledge is shared, Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Kovach (2009) and Thomas (2005) have articulated Indigenous storytelling as *methodology*. Mainstream

³Cultural guide and practitioner Larry Laliberte has noted that the term “wholistic” is preferred since this communicates the idea of a “whole” or the “fullness” of inclusion, whereas the term “holistic” could be understood as closer to a “hole” or “gap.” We use the term “wholistic” for this reason throughout the paper (personal communication, November 15 2011).

qualitative research uses a variety of approaches to analyze and interpret peoples' stories, such as life history, oral history, and narrative inquiry. These approaches have many commonalities with Indigenous storytelling; however, Kovach (2009) articulates Indigenous storytelling as a distinct methodology since "the way that a culture employs a story differs" (p. 96). An understanding of Indigenous storytelling requires those working within the Western paradigm to disrupt the dominant English-language association between story and fiction. Indigenous storytelling relays Indigenous values, beliefs, and ways of seeing the world as well as transmits history and memory (Archibald, 2008; McLeod, 2007). As traditional culture guide and practitioner Laliberte says,

Indigenous oral history is just as valid and significant as Western written history and it should be recognized as such. When undertaking research on traditional knowledge, you need to talk to the bona fide Elders and traditionalists. To have a meaningful and profound effect, the research of Indigenous knowledge must come from the Indigenous peoples to negate ambiguity and inaccuracy. Only then will the idea, "periphery of Indigenous and Western paradigms" begin to take shape subsequently now having the ability to proceed within as opposed to without. (personal communication, January 26, 2013)

Indeed, it is the Elders and other ceremonial faith keepers who hold this traditional knowledge that is considered sacred.

Canadian Indigenous scholars have conceptualized different ways of engaging with Western and Indigenous paradigms. For instance, Ermine describes "ethical space" as formed when researchers, recognizing the differences between Western and Indigenous worldviews, engage a dialogue "in between" these philosophical traditions (Ermine, 2007; Ermine, Sinclair, & Jeffrey, 2004). Given Canada's history of colonizing research on Indigenous peoples, Tait (2008a) adds Western-trained researchers working with Aboriginal communities have a moral and ethical obligation to gain an understanding of the tenants of Indigenous knowledge. It is argued that creating this "space" will help dismantle the hierarchy of knowledge embedded in research institutions and processes.

Many Indigenous scholars and non-Indigenous scholars are working in this "ethical space." For instance, Reading and Wien (2009) have recently conceptualized an Integrated Life Course and Social Determinants of Health Model of Aboriginal Health. This model is informed by Indigenous worldviews and takes into consideration Aboriginal peoples' histories and lived realities. Specific to the addictions field, Dell and colleagues (2012, 2011) have reflected on how, to varying degrees, using Western addictions treatment and prevention practices with Aboriginal individuals and communities is problematic. For instance, as Western psychiatry is based on an individualistic, biomedical model, most often its practitioners do not take into account wholistic views of mental wellness, the protective influence of traditional cultural practices and beliefs, or the historical, social, political, and economic factors that shape First Nations youth experiences with substance use and mental wellness (Dell et al., 2011). In the last year, Canada's federal funding body for health research—the Canadian Institutes for Health Research—launched an Aboriginal Roadmap Signature Initiative founded on Elder Albert Marshall's principle of two-eyed seeing for an integrative science:

learning to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous knowledges and ways of knowing, and from the other eye with the strengths of Western (or Eurocentric, conventional, or mainstream) knowledges and ways of knowing . . . and to using both these eyes together, for the benefit of all. (Bras d'Or Lakes, n.d.)

Currently missing from this dialogue are documented processes and practices that engage with this “ethical space,” as originally conceptualized by Ermine et al. (2004).

Thinking the Rhizome

With Canadian research formally recognizing that Indigenous and Western post-positivist paradigms need to work alongside one another for progress to be made in Aboriginal health, it is increasingly important to articulate how research teams attempt to enact such collaboration and integration. As Ermine et al. (2004) articulate, “‘ethical space’ is a concept, a process that unfold, that is inclusive of a series of stages from dialogue to dissemination of results, each played out in many different codes and relationships at the level of research practice” (p. 21). The rhizome, as articulated by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), offers a means to conceptualize an environment for open research-creation practices to unfold so that work in the shared “space” on the periphery of Indigenous and Western paradigms can take place. It situates the “two eyed-seeing” dialogue as a practice of research-engagement mobilized through our everyday practices, particularly for those whose actions broker knowledge. To wholly describe the rhizome as initially offered by Deleuze and Guattari is not possible within the confines of this paper. Instead, we will review the principle elements of the rhizome to conceptualize how this model of thought can be used for open research-creation practices.

To describe this process, it is helpful to think about the rhizome as a method of understanding (Drummond, 2005; Honan, 2007; Stehlik, 2004). Honan (2007) explains,

Deleuzian understandings of rhizomatic thinking help disrupt that linear and layered thinking about subject positioning that is so dominant in modernist approaches . . . Remove the straight lines—remove the layers—and what remains is a map of possible pathways . . . it is in this process of becoming that one deals pleasurably with contradictions. (p. 535)

That said, Drummond (2005) also cautions that the rhizome “is actually a very difficult concept to grasp and is often more a description of what may happen rather than a conscious undertaking that one sets out to achieve” (pp. 259–260). He shares that openness itself is not constitutive of rhizomatic thought. Rather, this openness creates the conditions of possibility for the rhizome where qualities of creativity, connection, and experimentation flourish.

The rhizome is conceptualized as relational, as existing in diverse forms, and supporting multiplicity in thinking. It holds similarities with Indigenous ways of knowing (or coming to know), as illustrated through concepts such as “*Va*,” which emphasizes relationality and multiplicity (Te Pou, 2008) as well as the Cree understanding of *mamatowisowin*, which conceptualizes creativity as emerging contextually, in and through relation (Ermine, 1995). As Ermine (1995) states, “It is an experience in context, a subjective experience, that for the knower, becomes knowledge in itself” (p. 104). Similarly, Colman (2010) writes that

rhizomatic process is not assimilative, rather it is a “relational milieu” that “gives form to evolutionary environments where relations alter the course of how flows and collective desire develop” (p. 235). Any point of a rhizome can connect with any other, for a “rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 25). There is a ceaseless connection hypothesized “between semiotic chains, organization of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 7). For example, a rhizome is not necessarily linked to linguistic features. It aligns with nature, providing a moving and adaptable model of thought-practice that could be described as a living, or animate, process. The rhizome offers a way to break thought away from (without excluding) dialectical modes and binary logics; it supports multiplicity in thinking.

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1987), “whenever a multiplicity is taken up in a structure, its growth is offset by a reduction in its laws of combination” (p. 6). As such, when an otherwise emergent research process has a formal institutionalized method imposed on it, part of the original process may be silenced, but it is not lost. The shape of a rhizome varies according to the dimensions under consideration. Certain ways of knowing are privileged in the “laws of combination” as fostered within Western institutionalized modes of presenting and retaining knowledge. Indeed, some Indigenous scholars have discussed the importance of engaging in ceremonial and spiritual practices as part of their research process, but keeping these practices out of institutional reports and documents to protect this knowledge from appropriation by Euro–Western institutions (Kovach, 2009). Thinking rhizomatically makes this aspect of formal research visible and explicit. The rhizome admits the connections that are otherwise excluded precisely as those that are excluded. There is great plasticity in thinking about research and knowledge production rhizomatically because it offers researchers an avenue for creative recombination and more adaptable, or responsive, engagement with living-processes. The rhizome can help those engaging research to retain what is otherwise excluded in more formalized methods, it is a fitting description for thinking about methods in cross-cultural research settings and in the brokering of knowledge.

The rhizome connects through differences as much as similarity, a facet of great importance when working with different ways of knowing. This is illustrated by Drummond’s (2005) engagement with the rhizomatic assemblage in his philosophy of nursing work. He found that his experience was one of “an experiment in connectivity between previously disparate elements, an engagement with a problem in which there was a creative dimension with no prior planned knowledge or content” (p. 260). The action to solve the problem in the example “did not come from a range of possible solutions already stored in memory” (p. 260), but instead was a creative recombination of otherwise disparate elements. Exploring the community knowledge brokers’ experiences in the three projects considered in this paper relays how the principle elements of rhizomatic thought were enacted, though not named as such, and can serve as a point of reference for the creation of an environment that fosters open research-creation practices, to unfold in the shared space, on the periphery of Indigenous and Western paradigms.

Knowledge Brokers

The concept of a “knowledge broker” is relatively new to the fields of health care and academic practice, but it is our contention that this role embodies and helps generate an ethical space for research by transforming knowledge. The Canadian Health Services Research Foundation (CHSRF) forged widespread uptake of the term in 2003, when it released a report detailing the benefits of private-sector knowledge brokers and brokering (CHSRF, 2003, p. 1). Hargadon (1998) explains that within the corporate world, businesses have been situated as the knowledge brokers with the activity of knowledge brokering to achieve the goal of continuous innovation for competitive advantage. CHSRF applied the concept of knowledge brokering to health-system management and policy making in an attempt to fill the “know–do” gap in the health field (Lomas, 2007; Meyer, 2010). To do this, the role of the individual as a knowledge broker, rather than a business, was applied and central to this role is impacting health-related research, policy, and evidence-based practices (CHSRF, 2003; Hargadon, 1998).

Nearly a decade later, uncertainty remains around the term knowledge broker. Although there is an increase in the use of knowledge brokers within academic social science settings, the recent work of Knight and Lightowler (2010) confirms that “the ‘Knowledge Broker’ role is not clearly defined in the literature or in practice, whether for individuals or for organizations” (p. 547). Meyer (2010) has attempted to theorize the practices of knowledge brokers, arguing that they can create a new kind of knowledge— brokered knowledge— defined as “knowledge made more robust, more accountable, more usable; knowledge that ‘serves locally’ at a given time; knowledge that has been de- and reassembled” (p. 123). Ideally, the influence of knowledge brokers in connecting research to action should move the transfer of knowledge from a purely technical exercise to one that integrates the social with the technical (Lomas, 2007, p. 130). However, the majority of knowledge broker positions are held by institutional representatives, not community members, making their primary duty the dissemination of information while ensuring the uptake (and impact evaluation) of research findings across disciplines or integration with professional practices. Meyer argues that brokering knowledge “means far more than simply *moving* knowledge—it also means transforming knowledge” (Meyer, 2010, p. 120). Knowledge that has been transformed does not resemble a hybrid or merely a combination of two disparate elements working in tandem; transformation is the new, emergent from particular conditions of possibility.

Meyer (2010) also argues that thinking about knowledge brokers as on the “periphery” of particular paradigms may be more fruitful than thinking of them as “in-between” worlds and promptly calls for further exploration. Seizing on the opening left by Meyer’s unanswered query, it is our position that the periphery is a more open mode. Discussing this question underscores the importance of rhizomatic approach to thought and method. Thinking of knowledge brokers as in-between folds the brokering of knowledge into a dualistic frame that produces hybrids through the opportunistic combination of two elements. Dualism in Western thought is institutional and systemic, it structures thought. Dualism limits knowledge to particular laws of combination that, as mentioned above, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue happens whenever multiplicity is taken up into structure. This is particularly important when knowledge brokers are engaging across spaces typically understood to be in

dualistic opposition, rather than collaboration, such as academia/community, Western/Indigenous, colloquial/evidence-based, and theory/practice. Brokers then are being asked to navigate very strict laws of combination through the imposition of equally strict and narrow categories. Relationships are reduced to bidirectional movement and the idea of a “between” is all that these laws of combination allow for researchers to navigate.

Thinking of the broker as in-between also positions this individual (or organization) as quite literally “between worlds” rather than as existing simultaneously in both-at-once across and through difference. It must be emphasized that one paradigm or another, depending on the conditions of possibility or “context” of a given moment, may more heavily influence the broker’s positioning, actions, and engagement. Thinking about brokers as on the periphery begins to take account of multiplicity beyond dualism and may also incorporate the active conditions of possibility, or context, through which the transformation of knowledge can actually be made to happen. Using the term *periphery* still holds implications toward a centering, or particular focus on events, such that the broker can not be fully inside or onside with any mode of knowing. The broker on the periphery is still somehow apart from the whole. As a subject in relation, the broker is literally then decentered, not fitting any particular or specific context. However, in thinking through this peripheral frame (or structure) of thought, the context or conditions of possibility may be taken into account. The periphery still holds laws of combination, but in thinking rhizomatically, the connections/differences articulated between periphery, dualism, and subject can be seen as mutually co-constitutive agents in the generation of knowledge. This is the kind of fluidity, diversity, and connection that the rhizome model can help express.

Indigenous research and community-based teams have been engaging in knowledge brokering practices for years without formally naming them as such (see, for instance, Baydala et al., 2006; Saul et al., 2008). Thus, how knowledge is transformed by community members on research teams has been largely un-documented. Markedly absent is research and theorizing around how knowledge brokers’ unique relational positioning with/in communities they are working can shape research processes. We suggest that the rhizome is a generative and open mode for thinking about this role and for mapping⁴ the transformation of knowledge. Knowledge brokers directly experience and aid the rhizomatic growth of a project; these experiences benefit researchers by making visible those elements of the research process that would otherwise remain unseen. They are still present in the assemblage after all.

Three Projects

Conversations were facilitated with 10 community knowledge brokers from two related projects that attempted to apply Western and Indigenous community-based approaches to research. The first is a national Canadian Institutes of Health Research–funded study titled *From Stilettos to Moccasins*, a collaboration between researchers at the University of

⁴Deleuze and Guattari argue that the rhizome is a map, not a tracing. This distinction is essential because the map “is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” (1987, p. 12), whereas tracing follows preset paths, reproducing what is already thought to be there. Mapping then fosters connections and creativity. As a practice of multiplicity, the map is also then part of the rhizome that it seeks to articulate.

Saskatchewan (U of S), the National Native Addictions Partnership Foundation (NNAPF), a community-based agency committed to facilitating empowering processes with First Nations and Inuit communities to further develop their capacity for addressing addictions and related issues, and the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), Canada's national addictions agency. The second project is also an initiative of the U of S and NNAPF, and of which CCSA is a contributor, and is a Saskatchewan-based research-creation conversation titled *Aboriginal Culture as Intervention*. These two projects have also recently joined together to develop a third project, titled *Exchanging Conversations* a service-provider workshop to be hosted in the majority of the Health Regions in Saskatchewan, Canada. Examining the community knowledge brokers' experiences in all three projects enables an engagement with all three phases of research processes; research-creation, research application, and research finding implementation.

To gain an understanding of these research processes, project researcher and writer Holly McKenzie facilitated discussions with 10 knowledge brokers during May and June 2012. The conversations were primarily conducted via telephone and ranged in length from 5 min to over an hour. In addition, McKenzie visited the guiding Elder for the *Aboriginal Culture as Intervention* project, Campbell Papequash, at his home. Further information was gathered in conversation with cultural guide and practitioner Larry Laliberte via telephone. While repeatedly listening to the recordings and reading the notes from these conversations, connections emerged between how the knowledge brokers experienced the research (and research-creation) processes and key elements of the rhizome. These indicative "findings" were discussed among the authors of this article and verified with the 10 participating knowledge brokers. The connections are explored below.

Aboriginal Culture as Intervention as Research Creation: Project Background and Role of the Knowledge Broker

A community conversation titled *Aboriginal Culture as Intervention* was initiated in January 2012 within the province of Saskatchewan, Canada (<http://tinyurl.com/CultureAsIntervention>). The guiding question for this conversation is—"How has Aboriginal culture helped you, or someone you know, on the journey of healing from addictions?" This conversation is a "research-creation" project, a term defined by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (2012) as

[a] creative process that comprises an essential part of a research activity, and fosters the development and renewal of knowledge through aesthetic, technical, instrumental or other innovations. Both the research and the resulting literary/artistic work(s) must meet merit review standards of excellence and be suitable for publication, public performance or viewing.

Guided by three community-based knowledge brokers across the province, Saskatchewan residents were encouraged to join the conversation in-person (e.g., community events or individual meetings) and on-line (e.g., Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter). This project brought together people of various backgrounds to form a project team comprised of those with traditional Indigenous knowledge, community knowledge, lived experiences dealing with addictions, and academic knowledge. At the outset, three short videos were produced in

collaboration with community members who were already familiar with team members. This initial sharing emphasized the spirit of reciprocity as a central aspect of the project's ethics. It was hoped that making this offering would help offset the problematic research practice of taking knowledge away from community. With the hiring of community knowledge brokers, several thousand people were reached in the conversation. The unique skill sets and life experiences of each broker made the project reach possible within a time frame limited by funding deadlines.

Each of the brokers offered an area of expertise grounded in life experience and was often complemented by several modes of more formal education. Their knowledge was primarily fostered through working in positions of advocacy related to the health and well-being of Indigenous communities in Saskatchewan. For example, a Cree broker drew on her lived experience of addictions treatment and service provision, which had prompted her to complete training in addictions counseling prior to working on this project. Another Cree broker had been employed at the University of Saskatchewan with Aboriginal Student Services for more than 20 years. She is respectfully known across communities for her good work and humor. The third broker was working toward a master's degree in public health at the time and identifies as part of the White-settler community, but had extensive experience working as an ally with Indigenous communities. These unique experiences allowed for the team to act in a competent and responsive manner when engaging with individual's unique contexts, diverse community members' perspectives, and heterogeneous environments across the province. Furthermore, due to the brokers' training within formal institutions of education they also had important knowledge about academic cultures.

An important element of the brokers' ability to engage with this process is their extensive knowledge about community dynamics and respectful cultural protocols. With this knowledge, the brokers were able to engage with people at various gatherings, including powwows or sweat lodge ceremonies. Avoiding the Western tendency to homogenize Indigenous cultures is extremely important, because there is no "one way" of engaging or practicing culture. Saskatchewan's Indigenous populations are diverse and comprised by many Nations. As one example, there are at least five languages actively engaged in communities across the province. Language base is only one indicator of the distinct practices and ways of thinking that were brought together to discuss healing for this project. The synthesis of various knowledges held by the brokers and their resulting ability to be aware and responsive to the various cultural perspectives aided in building trust with community members. This formed the foundation for an open conversation between community members and the project team.

Over 100 people publicly shared their story of healing as a result of the conversation between January and March, 2012. Many others shared experiences with the brokers, but emphasized this knowledge was for the broker to carry into her practice and not for the general public. These conversations were documented as having occurred but were not recorded. This process-oriented approach to gathering stories reflects the importance of relational accountability within Indigenous research and emphasizes the present-absence of rhizomatic knowledge building. The stories that were to be shared publicly were assembled into a project package comprised of a DVD, an interactive journey magnet, and an exercise

sheet to help continue the conversation. The DVD includes videos, three of which have been translated from English language to Cree language (this is the most commonly used Indigenous language in the province), songs, poetry, written narratives, drawings, and music. Each story shares the importance of Aboriginal culture to individuals' healing journeys from addiction. It is worth noting that the conversation is ongoing and the project package simply provided a sample of stories to date that could be distributed to health service providers, community organizations, and individuals to act as a foundation toward further sharing. Following the creation of this product and the unexpected continuation of project funding, additional community knowledge brokers were hired to facilitate sharing the conversation at the community level. These brokers have distributed nearly 5,000 project packages across Saskatchewan to date. Informing this distribution is reciprocity and respectful relationships, meaning the first priority is returning these stories to those who have already contributed to the conversation as well as sharing packages with those who want to join the conversation now.

From Stilettos to Moccasins as Research: Project Background and Role of the Knowledge Broker

From Stilettos to Moccasins is a community-based research initiative that was initiated in 2005 to study the healing journeys of criminalized First Nations, Inuit, and Métis women from drug abuse (<http://www.addictionresearchchair.com/creating-knowledge/national/cihr-research-project>). Team members included Indigenous Elders, academic researchers, government policy makers, university student research assistants, treatment providers, and women with lived experience of addictions. Over 100 qualitative semistructured interviews were conducted with women in treatment and who completed treatment for drug abuse at National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse treatment centers in Canada. In addition, interviews were conducted with 40 treatment providers, the majority of whom were on their own healing journeys. The key finding was that to heal from drug abuse, there is a need for women to re-claim, and for some to claim for the first time, a healthy self-identity as an Aboriginal woman and this includes understanding the negative impacts of stigma. The findings also revealed the essential supportive role service providers play in these women's lives.

As well as academic papers, the research team created a song and music video based on the project's key findings. Developing a song and music video was a priority product for our team given our project partners, the significant historical storytelling role of music in the lives of Indigenous people in Canada, and the fact that translating the study results to various audiences was a fundamental element of our research plans from the outset. Most importantly "... the knowledge gained in the study needed to be translated through a culturally-relevant technique that would recognize, legitimize and celebrate Aboriginal women's historically silenced voices" (Dell, 2011, p. 11).

The song and music video, titled *From Stilettos to Moccasins* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1QRb8wA2iHs>), led to the development of a half-day, interactive health intervention workshop to be held with women in addictions treatment centers, community-based agencies, and correctional facilities across Canada. The goals of the workshop are (1)

to discuss the role of identity and stigma in the healing journeys of Aboriginal women in treatment for drug abuse; (2) to offer hope and inspiration, gathered from over 100 Aboriginal women in substance abuse treatment who shared their healing journeys; and (3) to reflect on participants' understandings of identity, stigma, and the healing journey and learn from one another.

Fourteen knowledge brokers from across the country were hired between January and June of 2012 to distribute 150 workshop kits and provide follow-up support. All knowledge brokers are of First Nations or Métis descent and have lived experiences of criminalization and/or addictions. Much like the *Aboriginal Culture as Intervention* provincial project, being knowledgeable about and responsive to local cultural protocols across Canada was an essential part of building trust and offering relevant support to women on their healing journeys. The synthesis of diverse knowledges held by the knowledge brokers was the most important element to foster the successful deployment of this project's product and for gathering evaluative feedback. Working nationally requires even further awareness, care, and attentiveness for local practices and ways of knowing than working provincially since the diversity of Indigenous populations across Canada is even more complex than within Saskatchewan. The knowledge brokers presented the workshop in various community and institutional locations, with women-only groups and (even though the workshop was designed specifically for women participants) with mixed groups of men and women. In response to the widespread interest and use of these workshop kits, we continue to offer it at no cost and it is now available online (<http://www.addictionresearchchair.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/On-Line-workshop-now-available-December2012.pdf>).

Exchanging *Conversations* as Research Finding Implementation: Project Background and Role of the Knowledge Broker

The development of a full-day workshop for health service providers in Saskatchewan began in October 2012 with the goal of sharing knowledge developed through the *Aboriginal Culture as Intervention* and *From Stilettos to Moccasins* projects. The workshop offers a basic orientation of how culture can foster healing from addictions and provides tools for service providers, such as the DVD and journey magnet package, among others. The workshop has three learning objectives: (1) To explore cultural humility, (2) To explore the role of Aboriginal culture in wellness from a strengths-based perspective, and (3) To honor the role of cultural identity in healing from addictions. This workshop will be held in many of the 13 Saskatchewan Health Regions and pilot testing of the workshop has been met with great success. Despite being under provincial health system mandates, the devolution of power is a valued component of Canadian health care practices and this carries over to the provincial health system. As such, each region maintains autonomous decision making to foster locally responsive care provision. To help garner voluntary participation from the Health Regions, a workshop advertising trailer has been developed and is available online (<http://youtu.be/KUgUw5tCAOw>). A webinar session explaining the workshop content for regional decision makers has also fostered voluntary engagement with the workshop. Voluntary engagement with the conversation is of primary importance for the *Exchanging Conversations* team since this approach enables a willingness to learn with an open heart and mind—a key teaching offered by a local Elder in the workshop itself.

Several knowledge brokers from the earlier projects are involved with the workshop delivery and their role is to facilitate learning on the day and then provide follow-up support if providers have questions thereafter. In response to concerns voiced by brokers during each of the prior projects, the *Exchanging Conversations* team has shifted the lexicon from the term knowledge broker to that of knowledge ambassador. The team members expressed that the broker terminology connoted an ownership of knowledge that is inconsistent with Indigenous principles of sharing. The team members also indicated that the term “broker” carried a tone of monetary exchange and its use created discomfort among some community members who questioned the team’s intentions. The association between community knowledge generation and exchange and financial negotiation is particularly problematic considering the history of appropriation of Indigenous intellectual property for Western researchers’ capital gain (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). This is the sort of responsive shift that the broker role should foster such that research-creation remains open and research practices are consistent with community expectations. In light of this movement within our research practice, we will use the term “knowledge ambassadors” throughout the remainder of this paper.

Mapping the Experiences of the Knowledge Ambassadors

The conversation with knowledge ambassadors from each project relayed key ways in which the principle elements of rhizomatic thought are present (even if not named as such within those conversations). More precisely, it is that the rhizome is relational, supports multiplicity, and exists in diverse forms. It is effective for offering a mode of thought that is wholly engaging and at the same time respecting the generative tensions of the sameness and difference underlying otherwise divergent research paradigms. The voices of the knowledge ambassadors offer valuable insight because “spoken words are the selected extraction from the nexus of experience that converge into appearance” (Manning, 2009, p. 216). The experiences relayed from the knowledge ambassadors highlight thresholds, shifts, and changes in the process as this transforms knowledge.

Holding Tensions: Transforming Knowledge in Relation

The community knowledge ambassadors operated without the clearly demarcated boundaries that so often divide the community member from the academic researcher, or the Indigenous paradigm from the Western. Separating processes merely reflects the Western paradigm that underlies the majority of institutionally generated knowledge. Being without the clear demarcations of role actually facilitates the rise of experiential tensions that, understood as a rhizomatic process, are themselves productive; helping prompt the transformation of knowledge through solutions that are not stored in memory, but emerge from creative dimensions in the manner described by Drummond (2005). Tension then is a marker of relations happening. Tensions express the intensity of processes pushing toward creative recombination.

Intensity would seem to be associated with nonlinear processes: resonance and feedback that momentarily suspend the linear progress of the narrative present from past to future . . . It [intensity] is a state of suspense, potentially of disruption. It is like a temporal sink, a hole in time, as we conceive of it and narrativize it.

(Massumi, 2002, p. 26)

Knowledge transformation, generated through intensity and expressed as a tension, is necessarily shaped by the knowledge ambassadors' everyday experience because there is little distinction between how community knowledge ambassadors live and how they approach the project. Everyday life and the synthesis of knowledge are one and the same in this context and that is precisely why these individuals are selected for such positions on project teams.

Similar to Knight and Lightowler's (2010) reference to knowledge brokering practices encompassing ambiguity and hybridity, the cohesive and simultaneous experiencing of both-and for knowledge ambassadors fosters the production of creative and innovative projects (p. 553). Two forms of both-and impact the knowledge ambassadors on these projects—utilizing Indigenous and Western methods while operating as an academic researcher and community member. These synchronous both-and's comprise the intermezzo of rhizomatic thought, navigated and experienced by the ambassadors. One project knowledge ambassador shared;

[W]hen we had some hesitation and some resistance from the community, it was most certainly because we were trying to tread between two lines and I don't know if we really fit there and if we had really come as far as we needed to. For some people, you most certainly would get there.

The language used here, to describe what can be characterized as a tension, elicits the terminology of *fitting* and *treading between two lines* in relation to a *getting there* suggesting reaching toward the end goal, product, or other point of measure. Tensions routinely became more palpable for the knowledge ambassadors when bias toward one way of knowing or another was privileged at particular moments of intensity in the project, such as when Western paradigms were privileged over Indigenous paradigms to meet institutionally based project requirements. Despite the project team's best efforts to privilege Indigenous ways of knowing, the limits of institutional accountability resulted in an official reliance on Western paradigms to gauge, measure, or account for the "success" of the project.⁵ One knowledge ambassador commented that while the project was "a circular process . . . so many times we were trying to jam it back linear. Things were allowed to be circular for some things, but for some things they had to be linear, particularly when we were creating the product." However, once the institutional markers of "success" were in place through the production of a product or funding report, the project process could again shift to reemphasize Indigenous paradigms, the importance of process, and relational accountability to Indigenous communities. These divergences in process that produced tensions for knowledge ambassadors are what leave marks and gaps in the project and these crossings are precisely what shape the rhizomatic map as "an experimentation in contact with the real"

⁵Indeed, this reliance has not been left unquestioned. Some Indigenous academics are pushing to "decolonize" and "Indigenize" the academy (see, for instance, Kuokkanen, 2007; Mihesuah & Wilson, 2004) as well as voicing concerns over how the "inclusion" of Indigenous knowledges within the academy may be appropriative and harmful to communities (see Greenwood, de, & Fraser, 2008). Drawing on Smith (2009), Wilson (2008) and our experience in this project, we argue that "accountability" needs to be reconceptualized. Ethical research involves forming relationships with Indigenous communities that we are working with and being accountable to those relationships. This includes challenging institutional norms of accountability that interfere with this process.

(Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.12), that which remains unseen, but is still present in the assemblage.

This ambassador also observed that there really was not enough time for the project's circular process of having the conversation be fully successful within the time frame dictated by the funding deadlines. As such, the research team approached this time period with the expectation of beginning a conversation that would continue (and the team would foster) after the funding deadline and report was complete. Indeed, the finality and stillness connoted in the term "deadline" is largely inconsistent with Indigenous research paradigms that emphasize a much less rigid segmentation of time (Manning, 2009; McLeod, 2007). Instead of a deadline or point that directs the process toward an end goal or other finality, thinking rhizomatically means thinking in terms of "phase shifts" or "thresholds" because this encompasses tension as a productive force. Tension encourages researchers and community members alike to think relationally about the movement of a project, rather than thinking in divisive modes that can be measured against static points. The knowledge ambassador role then is to lead the project team in finding ways to engage the threshold as the space for knowledge transformation. This type of engagement fosters transformation by valuing the threshold of differential processes as a generative space. According to Knight and Lightowler (2010), the growth in knowledge broker roles within U.K. academic institutions "appears to be driven by the increased importance being placed on the 'impact' of academic research" (p. 544), and there are similar trends among funding bodies and academic institutions in Canada. The traditional post-positivist understanding of "outcomes" has too often taking priority, such that outcomes are to be identified, measured, and evaluated (Brown & Strega, 2005; for example, see Bowen, n.d.). According to one of the project knowledge ambassadors, community members may see the conversation itself as the "product," and thus emerges the question of how can one really measure the impact of a conversation? This problematic question of measurement is highlighted in academic literature (Glass & Ellett, 1980; Koch, 1994; Valéry, 2007). When working from an Indigenous paradigm, all products that are relevant and useful to communities, whether they can be measured, are a way to share knowledge and engage in reciprocity through research (Kovach, 2009; Laliberte, 1997; Wilson, 2008). Affording value to the process itself is the primary function of the community knowledge ambassador role.

Introductions: Community Relations of Multiplicity

The community knowledge ambassadors often spoke of the process of introducing themselves⁶ or putting themselves forward, to communicate about two relationships—the personal relation with the research process, and the relation with other community members. Indigenous systems of knowledge (paradigms) emphasize relationality. Indigenous approaches to research therefore emphasize relational accountability (Wilson, 2001, 2008). Indeed, Absolon and Willett (2005) share that,

⁶The introduction of self in this context is akin to Isabelle Stengers' thinking regarding ethical engagement and antidotes to judgment for contemporary ecologies of practice. She advocates finding an ethical ground, from which to encounter difference, that is achieved by "introducing oneself" rather than seeking "know the other" (Stengers, 2011, p. 62). This mode of thinking inhibits the reduction of identity into static categories, prevents the formation of an exotic other, and fosters collaboration through (rather than in spite of) difference.

When researching Aboriginal knowledge and Aboriginal peoples, Aboriginal Elders and communities expect researchers to foster a knowledge creation process that accounts for many variables, including epistemological, cultural, colonial, historical, and contemporary contexts of both the researched and the researcher. It is *putting ourselves forward* that establishes these contexts, guides the research process, and determines research outcomes. Research outcomes in turn, affect policy, programming, practice, and societal perception. (p. 123, emphasis in original)

The knowledge ambassadors on these projects acted by “putting themselves forward” and this initiated relationship building in all spheres. As one of the knowledge ambassadors said, “The biggest thing I do when I start my presentation is I tell my story and I can see them relax as I tell my story. Participants get to know my story and who I am.” Another knowledge ambassador reflected on her position as an ally. She experienced resistance from Aboriginal community members, toward her and the project, particularly at earlier stages of the project process. She realized that initially she was not locating herself, or the project team, in relation to the Saskatchewan Aboriginal communities the project team wanted to engage with. She was not explaining who she was, what experiences she had working with Aboriginal communities, or who on the project team was informing the process and, by extension, the relationship. In particular, she was not introducing herself or the Elders and traditional cultural practitioners offering guidance to the project. When the knowledge ambassador began introducing herself and the project, the tension shifted into a generative form. As she relayed, “I feel you had to come at it from a more personal level to do what we were trying to do. . . because of the nature of what we were doing, we were trying to have a conversation with community.” The shift in how community members interpreted her personally then fostered an openness and trust toward the project aims.

By putting themselves forward, or introducing themselves, the knowledge ambassadors fostered trust, also then encouraging a multiplicity of engagements with the project process itself. This multiplicity, a facet of the rhizome as that which supports the multiple in the openness to connection, can be seen in the retention of diversity in the project products. The product is the subtraction ($n-1$) from the field of relation, an expression of the process that emerges (that is now called a product) as multiplicity is taken up by structure. Structure sets the laws of combination, the possibilities of form that are the “what happens” when process is met with the imposition of a formal structure or method. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) point out that multiplicity is not made through addition, but instead argue that to constitute the singular or unique from multiplicity, we are actually subtracting that element out, or pulling away from what is already multiple. This idea is expressed as the formula $n-1$. “Subtract the unique from the multiplicity to be constituted; write at $n-1$ dimensions. A system of this kind could be called a rhizome” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 6). Rhizomes foster an openness that supports multiplicity and this is contingent to the preeminence of relationships.

Relationships are the most important component of the knowledge-building process because it is in these relationships that knowledge emerges, or is transformed. The relational foundation of Indigenous research paradigms (Kovach, 2009; Laliberte, 1997; Wilson, 2008)

is an essential element to foster the multiplicity of connections that are possible. Multiplicity in this sense encompasses more than the subject position held by people involved on the project. The emphasis of multiplicity is the process engaged as the relationship between ways of knowing which comes to shape the project. The rhizome supports multiplicity by keeping these relational connections open and always in potential. As Wilson (2001) states,

An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all of creation. It is not just interpersonal relationships, not just with the research subjects I may be working with, but it is a relationship with all creation. It is with the cosmos, it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge. (pp. 176–177)

Accepting all knowledge as relational challenges, many of the taken-for-granted divisions are prominent in Western paradigms. The rhizome allows these foundational tensions to reach the foreground of the discussion via the knowledge ambassadors' experience of these intensities expressed as tension.

The tension generated through the relational intensity of otherwise divergent paradigms may actually help researchers to identify team engagement with multiple openings, rather than reduce these tensions into traceable channels. The rhizome offers a creative form through which thinkers can better illuminate the complexity of project team engagement with community. Essentially then, we are mapping the multiplicity of process rather than reducing an always living-process into static categories. Strict (often Western) research paradigms tend to trace the categories they seek, rather than mapping dynamic encounters as they emerge. The multiplicity of connections fostered through co-emergent practice, such as a research project, comes to characterize the shape and prominent features of the rhizomatic mapping that constitutes a “what happened” for the research project. The rhizome acclimatizes us toward thinking about pure-relation⁷ and simply does not exist aside the multiplicity of connections that it generates. This is just as individual knowledge can not exist, because all ways of knowing are relational.

Impressions: Existing in Diversity of Form

From the relational multiplicity that characterizes the rhizome comes its diverse forms and this is evident in the knowledge ambassadors' descriptions of their experiences working on the projects. Description may occlude particular experiential elements, but it may also reveal the experience of experiencing. As philosopher Brian Massumi (2002) writes, “For out of the pressing crowd an individual action or expression *will* emerge and be registered consciously. One ‘wills’ it to emerge, to be qualified, to take on sociolin-guistic meaning . . . to become a content of one’s life . . .” (pp. 30–31). In the descriptions offered of how the experience of transforming knowledge changed the ambassador, or “had an impact” on their lives, the rhizomatic process is still at play and perhaps most explicitly coming to form. Experience consists of the multiplicity of affects that comprise a relational field.⁸ As such,

⁷“Pure” is used here in the same manner Massumi (2011) describes William James’ use of the term. Pure is the “qualifier for the bare-active first flush of emergent experience” (Massumi, 2011, p. 10).

the description offered by the knowledge ambassadors offers a window from which to understand a rhizomatic process at play.

Assessing the impact of acting as a knowledge ambassador would be the more common route for a paper of this type, but this approach would only capture the effects of a particular experience. In short, impact designates an effect while impression designates affect. The affective is of greater interest here because this is how the rhizome can be seen to encompass such diversity of form. Affectivity offers an opening toward thinking the experience of an encounter that is consistent with rhizomatic mapping because affect is a key indicator of process-at-work and signals that change is occurring (Fornssler, 2011). Massumi (2002) explains that affect is not a synonym for emotion, but rather affect is the felt-ness of intensity, while emotion is the feedback of experience, or “a recognized affect” (p. 61). For affective experience it is the impression (really just the pressing) and not the impact that matters (quite literally). Affect felt as intensity is “the turning point at which a physical system paradoxically embodies multiple and normally mutually exclusive potentials, only one of which is ‘selected’” (Massumi, 2002, pp. 32–33). The “selection” is what comes to be recounted in the description offered by the knowledge ambassadors and this reveals interaction, which as Massumi writes, “is precisely what takes form” (p. 9). In taking form, recall the relational tension of multiplicity that generates the transformation of knowledge. Note also then the affective impression from the multiplicity, retrospectively called selection, and we have something that denotes rhizomatic shape, along with all the other shapes this process did not take. Existing in diverse forms, the rhizome for this mapping is made visible through the tonal shift in the relational field of experience, which the ambassadors recount as a change.

Observations of change were articulated in the conversation with ambassadors when they were asked about how transforming knowledge affected them personally and professionally. Knowledge ambassadors most often spoke about qualities that crossed “spheres” such as an increase in confidence or pride. One knowledge ambassador expressed, “I am so proud to be a part of this team. I have never been so proud to be a part of something,” and another stated, “I am honored to be a part of this project. It uplifted me, it gave me that drive, more confidence. That is why I’m here, why I got on this path.” The knowledge ambassador responses regarding pride and confidence show the already present connection “across spheres” or through difference that demonstrates a rhizomatic connection taking differential form. Another ambassador relayed that through engaging people in conversation and hearing their stories “. . . even some people who I already knew their stories, I got to know them in a new way and their stories were humbling.” This “new sense” is indicative of change in the relational field particularly because this change occurred with “previously existing” relationships. Change in the ambassadors’ experience of relation in their everyday lives again demonstrates a shift in the relational field as recounted by another ambassador who spoke about how the project “became a part of my lived routine, part of who I am and what I do.” This wholistic integration of the knowledge ambassador role in the statement “who I

⁸Massumi (2011) describes a relational field as the “intensive envelopment of the contributing elements” (p. 20) but phrased with less philosophical rigor and more specificity toward this paper, the relational field offers the conditions of possibility that brings the rhizome to particular forms and shapes its potential connections.

am and what I do” connects the research process with everyday life, not by collapsing distinctions between personal and professional, but by refusing the segregation of a designated “role” at the outset. This is what supporting relational multiplicity means as the rhizome comes to expression in diverse forms. However, to isolate the experience of each ambassador is an $n-1$ function of multiplicity. The above does a rather large disservice to the rhizome in attempting application and individuation, even if this is necessary for the sake of communication, it is like extracting a star from its constellation. The alignment of knowledge ambassadors worked like a constellation—the diverse skill sets offered and distinct communities where each could connect—transforming the project from being an analytic idea or concept to becoming as process. Knowledge ambassadors foreground process as the project. Thinking the rhizome means understanding that the process is the project.

The Story Continues

The rhizome offered by Deleuze and Guattari (1987) suggests a mode for thinking about the transformation of knowledge and the important role of community-based knowledge ambassadors. The central features of the rhizome—that it is relational, supports multiplicity, and exists in diverse forms—provides a space for thinking about research-creation practices happening on the periphery of Indigenous and Western paradigms. Fostering these practices for research projects means making the process primary and this can be achieved through the role of the community-based knowledge ambassador. At the same time, the rhizome can not be transplanted in a formulaic fashion, because its growth is part of the environment/context and relationships in which it is grown. In other words, you can plan to follow the rhizome, but you can not plan the rhizome. To foster this form of engagement, four propositions⁹ are offered:

1. Cultivate relationships, by putting yourself forward;
2. Trust the process, it is and will remain your project;
3. Attune to the tensions, they express intensity and prompt transformation; and
4. Make new propositions, as Elder Campbell Papequash offers in the epigraph for this paper—the human capacity to develop is infinite.

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⁹Manning (2009) states that “Propositions move the concept into action, the movement always emergent, its creative potential never preestablished . . . they create enabling constraints for the opening of a relational process” (pp. 226–227).

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