*Article*

# YARNING AS PROTECTED SPACE: principles and protocols

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## Abstract

Traditional methods of imparting knowledge are known as yarning to Australian Aboriginal Elders and talking circles to North American First Nations peoples. Yarning is a relational methodology for transferring Indigenous knowledge. This article describes an emerging research methodology with yarning at its core, which provides respect and honour in a culturally safe environment. Yarning is highly structured, with protocols and principles providing participants control over the process and their stories. The methodology is embedded in a yarning space, which is framed by six protocols and seven principles. The protocols are gift, control, freedom, space, inclusiveness and gender specificity, and the principles are reciprocity, responsibility, relationship, dignity, equality, integrity and self-determination—to protect participants, stories and data. This is ensured through respectful and honouring relationships, responsibility and accountability between participants. The key camps in which the yarning journey is segmented are the Ancestors, protocols, principles, connections, data, analysis, processing and reporting, and the wider community.

## Keywords

yarning, Indigenous knowledge, stories, narratives, Indigenous research methodologies, Aboriginal

## Introduction

The foundations of this article have emerged from the Doctoral Thesis of Dr Stuart Barlo, a Yuin man from the far south coast of NSW, with the assistance of Professor Bill Boyd, Dr Alessandro Pelizzon and Dr Shawn Wilson. It describes a methodology developed to undertake Indigenous research that is based on traditional yarning practices and includes defined protocols and principles to establish yarning validity and reliability. While yarning is a generic term often used by Aboriginal Australians as a synonym to conversation, the practice of yarning is a formal strategy of negotiation and information sharing that when used in partnership with Aboriginal participants, allows for the development of culturally safe and impartial research. This process of sharing knowledge, the structures and versions of which are as diverse as the many Aboriginal nations of Australia (Bessarab, 2012; Dean, 2010), is reliant upon relationships, responsibility and accountability between the participants. It is common that articles on yarning or related modes of Indigenous communication describe applications, often in the fields of education, health or healing (e.g., Anuik & Gillies, 2012; Geia et al., 2013; Lin et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2014), and provide good example of the power and essence of yarning. This article, however, takes such descriptions further, by joining other authors such as Walker et al. (2014) and Jackson-Barrett et al. (2015) in identifying the cultural constructs that underlie the method of yarning that, in turn, provide a conceptual framework asserting yarning as a methodological approach to cultural data collection.

Dean argues that yarning has been a way of sharing, exploring and learning throughout the Dreaming (Dean, 2010). At its core, yarning relies primarily on storytelling and the use of oral narratives to convey information. Storytelling is, from an Indigenous perspective, an epistemological way of connecting with each other's experiences regardless of time, place and culture (Jackson-Barrett et al., 2015; Martin, 2003, 2008). Furthermore, storytelling is also used to teach children expectations and proper behaviour (Neidjie, 2002), and "[s]tories formed part of the Aboriginal cosmology; the dreaming stories informed people of how the world was created, set the protocols for behaviour and outlined responsibilities" (Bessarab, 2012, p. 22).

The yarning process itself is multi-layered, each layer fulfilling a different purpose, and is identified within traditional Aboriginal languages by a specific word (Barlo, 2016, p. 46). These yarning layers can be split into discrete groups. Examples include social yarn, research or topic yarn, management yarn, collaborative yarn, therapeutic yarn,

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family yarn and cross-cultural yarn (Bessarab, 2012; Lin et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2014). Each displays unique protocols and procedures and is designed to be utilised in different settings. In order to properly engage with Indigenous knowledge systems, researchers must be able to understand these distinct layers of yarning (Bessarab, 2012; Bessarab & Ng'andu, 2010; Dean, 2010; Geia et al., 2013), and thus, yarning as a discrete and specific research methodology can provide researchers with the necessary instruments to do so.

Wilson (2001) stated that "Indigenous ontology, epistemology, axiology and . . . methodologies are fundamentally different to western understandings" (pp. 176–177), and thus, Indigenous research must reflect Indigenous contexts and worldviews. Consequently, Indigenous research studies must be developed within an explicit Indigenous paradigm (Wilson, 2001). Overall, qualitative research methodologies do not appear to capture the entirety of the knowledge gained from yarning processes, nor do they display explicit cultural understanding of Indigenous knowledge. Therefore, these methodologies cannot necessarily ensure that Indigenist researchers engage with all the knowledge gained from the research process, including a culturally appropriate understanding of knowledge from an Indigenous perspective and its impact on the world, participants and researchers (Barlo, 2016; Boyd, 2014; Geia et al., 2013).

Dean (2010) has previously highlighted the possibility of yarning being developed into a separate and discrete methodology. However, while detailing many aspects of yarning, she did not fully articulate it as a methodology. This work arises from the search for a research methodology in the course of a doctoral thesis (Barlo, 2016) entitled "Can the impacts of colonisation on the dignity of Aboriginal men be reversed?" It builds upon Dean's proposal, and is encouraged by both Walker et al.'s (2014) and Jackson-Barrett et al.'s (2015) explicit understanding of yarning as methodology. In order to approach participants and the knowledge they shared in a respectful manner, Barlo investigated yarning as an approach to data collection. To test its validity and usefulness, a pilot project was initially undertaken and a yarning methodology was then fully developed as a result. This article describes the methodology thus developed for undertaking Indigenous research based on yarning that emerged from the doctoral thesis, and includes specific protocols and principles as they were developed in the course of ongoing exchanges with numerous Aboriginal participants.

Among the great plurality of Indigenous Australian peoples, the concept of yarning as a method of sharing information seems to be a common thread. Developing a deeper understanding of yarning as an entire methodology may be useful for other Indigenous people internationally.

## Yarning—an emerging methodology grounded in ancient practices

Five Elders from Australia and four Elders from Canada participated in the doctoral research, all of them respected leaders within their communities. Since meaningful engagement with Elders for participatory research is almost impossible without prior meaningful relationship, their involvement in the research project originated from deep prior relationships with the Australian Elders, while the Canadian Elders were subsequently approached through recommendation and introductions by other participants. The research was approved through two processes. First, the work was approved and supported by the Elders, as the senior authorities in their respective nations. In entrusting and supporting the researchers, especially the first author, with this research, the Elders established ethical and cultural principles and rules by which the research could be conducted. Second, the research was also approved through the authors' university Human Research Ethics Committee. Both forms of approval are mandatory for such research. The Human Research Ethics Committee approval included approval to publish the names of the participating Elders. This is in notable contrast to common practice in academic research, in which participants are de-identified or anonymised. In such a cultural setting as is discussed in this article, de-identifying participants is both disrespectful (breaching principles in the Australian *National Statement on the Ethics Conduct of Human Research* (National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), 2015)), and culturally inappropriate. The Elders, furthermore, insisted on being fully identified, and thus, a case was made to the university that full identification was not both ethically acceptable and mandatory.

Engagement with all Elders unfolded over a series of distinct yarning sessions, although, at this stage, yarning was not yet articulated as a distinct methodology. During the initial session, the project, as well as its overall approach was discussed. Each Elder then started to articulate what yarning meant to them and their communities. As a result, the researcher then adopted one of the deepest identified layers of yarning that required the most formal adherence to its associated protocols and principles. This yarning layer was identified as being traditionally utilised when an Elder imparts specific knowledge, thus requiring the person receiving the knowledge to be very focused and attentive. Interviews were recorded in both audio and visual modes, and then transcribed. The data collected were further validated by each participant.

This process produced an enormous volume of data in the form of stories or narratives, often derived from the lived experience of the storyteller, important to both the storyteller and to the research topic. It is also necessary to differentiate here between story and narrative. The term "narrative" carries many meanings, is used differently across distinct disciplines, sometimes being synonymous with "story" (Riessman & Quinney, 2005). However, narrative more often comprises the metacontext of the story, engaging the story's social and cultural context, its telling and agency, and its relationship with speaker and listener. Its power lies in being the "science of the imagination, whose reasoning seeks to understand [specific phenomena] in terms of human experience and purpose" (Greenhalgh et al., 2005, p. 443). It is this differentiation of story (as artefact) and narrative (as process) that informs the work described here.

## Analytical process

The analytic process of relational analysis consisted of four stages. First, in order to identify relational connections, the content of each participant's yarn was separated into individual stories. Second, each participant was consulted about the analysis of their narrative and was given the opportunity to add or withdraw any section of their original yarns. It is important to note that all participants chose to add to the narratives. Third, the yarns of all participants were then compared, producing a set of overall themes, on which the participants were further consulted. Fourth, both the participants and the researcher rated the importance of these overall themes. A comparison of these themes with each individual yarning session identified a profound degree of consistency across all yarning sessions.

As this yarning process unfolded, however, yarning itself became far more than just a tool for collecting data. It became readily apparent that yarning was indeed a methodology in its own right. As the participants discussed yarning as a mode of inquiry itself, it became obvious that yarning is guided by a clear set of structural principles and protocols. The principles and protocols described below thus emerged during these yarns, each one of them clearly visible when an Elder or knowledge custodian sought to explicitly transfer their knowledge to another person.

## Yarning—themes and camps

Yarning as a research methodology is very structured, giving participants control over the direction and the content of the yarn. This allows the participant to yarn about their history, ideas and any other information they wish to discuss without fear of redirection or interruption. In addition, this technique provides the opportunity for the participant to present their knowledge in whatever style they see as appropriate.

During a yarn, one of the Elders identified profound similarities between the research process and the hunting trips he underwent as a child with his father and grandfather. His father would take him to a special location in the bush where he was told that he could expect to find a particular type of food. They then moved to another place to find water, next to other types of food and so on as they move through the bush (U. L. Kelly, personal communication, 10 June 2012). The parallel described by Uncle Larry evoked a powerful metaphor, one that became a guiding pillar in the development of yarning as a methodology.

In order to inscribe yarning more accurately within an Indigenous perspective, the process of yarning can be portrayed as a metaphorical journey through a variety of *camps*, each fitting into the landscape with a precise function and purpose. Analysis of the yarns conducted during the research, for example, identified 18 overall themes or components, thus better identified as *camps* to further emphasise that yarning as a methodology is profoundly grounded in Indigenous traditional principles and practices. As we, both the researcher and the readers, move through the different phases of the yarning process, hopefully, we come to see how it unfolds in a manner similar to the hunting trip described by Uncle Larry. As the yarning process is further articulated within distinct and subsequent *camps*, the reader can find all relevant pieces of information and knowledge required to fulfil the distinct purposes of each yarning phase (see Figure 1).

## The yarning space camps

Within the first camps, the yarning space is established as a safe and protected space. This first phase of the yarning process contains the camps of the Ancestors, the protocols, the principles and the connections (see Figure 1).

### The Ancestors

This is the oldest and most influential camp in the overall yarning space, since, within an Aboriginal worldview, all subsequent structures, processes, protocols and principles flow from this camp. Aboriginal people recognise Ancestor spirits as the creator beings from the Dreamtime or Dreaming. It is these beings who are credited with the laying out of both all environmental features as well as all the laws and protocols that give foundation to Aboriginal society. Ancestors are believed to be present in everyday life and are acknowledged as being part of the yarning space. This camp is defined by the following two important elements: Lore/law and Adaptability.

*Lore/law* as directly given by the Ancestors is seen as the source of the principles and protocols that govern the yarning space. These extend from the relationship between Country and human beings, and between human beings themselves, to the responsibilities associated with these relationships to create a harmoniously functioning community.

*Adaptability* demonstrates the ability to learn from experience, and is seen as a strength demonstrated by Australian Indigenous cultures for thousands of years in response to the environmental changes, including rising sea levels in pre-colonial times, and, in more recent times, the impact of colonisation. One of the Elders aptly defined this element by saying that "we once hunted on foot and with bow and arrows, [but] we still hunt today using trucks and guns" (U. Barry, personal communication, 21 September 2014).

Colonisation has profoundly, and negatively, impacted the way people relate to the Ancestors, causing cultural devastation. Such devastation often reveals itself in forms of direct and lateral racial violence that lead to a deep breakdown of the way groups function, as well as profound individual trauma, that lingers today and will linger for generations (Sheehan, 2012, p. 88).

### The protocols

In this camp are located protocols dictating both proper behaviour and their contextual understanding. Protocols are a collection of set forms of etiquette to be observed by the participants. The yarning space is influenced by the following six main protocols that keep the participants safe while they are engaging in a research project, and

observance of these protocols ensures equality along with shared responsibility:

- *Gift*: A gift is given when the participant offers their knowledge; when this knowledge is accepted and valued, the gift is considered to be received;
- *Control*: The participant (and not the researcher) determines the length of the yarn, and, once begun, its overall direction. The participant also determines in what form the yarn will proceed, such as talking, dancing or drawing;
- *Freedom*: This is a critical protocol within this model, whereby, the participant shares only what they wish to share. How they choose to share their knowledge is also part of the freedom;
- *Space*: The physical place in which the yarning takes place needs to be culturally suitable. It is also important that the yarning space be physically comfortable;
- *Inclusiveness*: From an Indigenous perspective. everybody is welcome in the yarning space. In order to receive the gift of knowledge, the researcher must be listening actively and intently;
- *Gender specificity*: Personal characteristics of those who are present may determine the yarn topic, which may be gender, or age, specific.

When these six protocols are observed, four understandings develop and flow through the participants, generating a sense of community: (1) *equality*, especially in the sense of rights and opportunities; (2) *responsibility*, as the state or fact of recognising the duty to deal with something; (3) *integrity*, as the quality of being honest and having strong moral principles; and (4) *protection*, as the action of protecting someone or something, or of being protected.

### The principles

The principles listed below are more than a set of guidelines, and must be strictly adhered to as they provide cultural protection and safety, and aid in the creation of a dialogue capable of generating knowledge and understanding in a culturally safe environment:

- *Reciprocity* is often mistaken for a reciprocal arrangement, whereas, such reciprocation is only part of reciprocity. Reciprocity is more than giving a like-for-like. It is an honouring process that demonstrates the importance of the relationship, while maintaining a power balance within the space. Equally, respect is far more than simply respecting the person talking; it is respecting the person as well as the knowledge shared or the information provided. This type of respect is demonstrated through the way the information is utilised;
- *Responsibility* is demonstrated through the researcher's role in handling the data the participant has provided respectfully and in keeping the

participant informed each step of the way during the research process. Furthermore, the researcher is responsible for maintaining relationships well after the research has concluded;
- Any form of research creates a *relationship*, and thus, the researcher soon becomes part of the narrative of the participant and of the research process. Oftentimes, research involving Aboriginal Australians is reported as a negative experience for the communities involved because the researcher has subsequently ignored the relationship developed between the researcher and the participant in the course of the research.
- *Dignity* must be afforded to every person who enters the yarning space by treating each with the upmost respect and honour. Each person is accepted for who they are and honour is given for what they bring to the space. This applies to both the yarning participant and the researcher;
- *Equality*, from an Indigenous perspective, means that, regardless of age or gender, each person has the same rights and responsibilities within the yarning space;
- *Integrity* strengthens the yarning space, with the expectation for each person to be honest and fair. Within the yarning space, each person demonstrates their trustworthiness in the way they handle the stories told by others;
- Finally, *self-determination* allows each participant to choose to be there, or to end their participation at any time.

### The connections

It is in this camp that participants and research alike find a meaningful place. Uncle Ossie Cruse noted, "that in Australian Aboriginal culture there is always a place for you if are prepared to accept the responsibilities that accompany your acceptance" (U. O. Cruse, personal communication, 20 July 2013). Such a reciprocal connection is one of the most fundamental aspects of an Indigenous worldview. These connections are not only with humans but they include connections to the land, the ancestors, to history and to the future.

The total sum of these four camps establishes the yarning place as a protected space. Enshrined by the Ancestors, and enmeshed in a web of emerging connections, the yarning space is protected by seven principles and six protocols.

## The data camps

When the above concepts surrounding the yarning space are negotiated, shared, and understood, then the yarning can take place. The camps that follow are the most difficult and challenging camps to negotiate, because yarning as a process of data collection can produce an enormous amount of data. The data primarily come in the form of stories and the narratives used to tell the stories, often originating from the lives or the personal history of the storyteller/narrator. These stories and narratives are thus important not only to
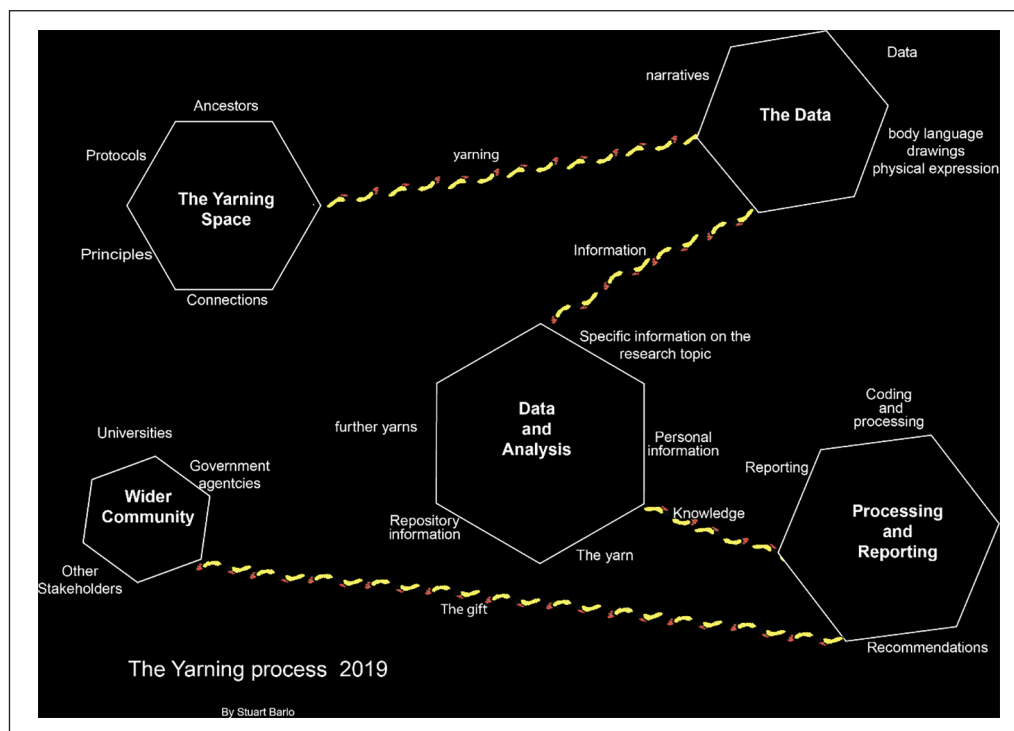
**Figure 1.** The yarning process (Barlo, 2019).

the research but to the lives of the participants. Furthermore, these stories and their narratives enable the researcher to investigate behaviours, values and perspectives (Bornat, 2001; Clandinin, 2006; Emden, 1998), while providing opportunities to gain a better understanding and to consider other opinions in a considerate manner. In an Aboriginal context, stories and narratives allow the exploration of social factors as well as individual identities (see Figure 1).

The knowledge being shared was already part of the participant's life prior to the research being introduced, and thus, remains the property of the participant. It is important to note here that the researcher is not cast in the role of a discoverer or explorer. In the telling of these stories, there occurs an exchange of knowledge, which pre-existed the exchange and was held by the participant prior to the research being initiated (Wilson, 2001). This is of great relevance, in order to prevent the risk that a researcher could lose sight of the relationships developed through the research process, both with the participants and with the knowledge being shared.

Another important aspect of narrative data is that features of the data can be shared in a variety of ways. While narratives certainly include the spoken word, they are by no means limited to this mode of communication. The researcher will find that it is not uncommon for a person from an Indigenous culture to express their stories in dance or movement. All of these modes of expression shape the final data that need to be subsequently processed, interpreted and coded.

Narrative data would generally fall within distinct categories, and each of these categories will determine how the data are used and what impact the data would have on the final results. The principles listed earlier are the same

principles that add protection to the yarning space and, while they are used to establish a safe yarning space, they are also applied to the knowledge of the data that is collected through the yarning time. These principles are applied here because, from an Indigenous perspective, knowledge is seen as possessing independent agency or as being "alive" (Adams et al., 2015).

When applying the principle of *reciprocity* to knowledge, it is important to understand that researchers can give knowledge a stronger platform from which it can be shared, and thus, they must be particularly careful in approaching the exchange. *Respect*, in this context, is far more than simply respecting the participant; it is also about respecting the knowledge or the information that has been provided. Once a participant has provided information to a research process, there arises a *responsibility* for the researcher, not only to handle the data respectfully, but also to keep the participant informed at each step of the way during the research process. In order for data to be treated with honour and respect, a *relationship* needs to be formed with the data itself. This relationship will inevitably protect the way the data are used since Indigenous people hold a fundamental belief that knowledge is relational (Maurial, 1999), has agency (Adams et al., 2015) and is shared with all of creation (De La Torre, 2004). If knowledge, information or data have agency, then it must be treated with *dignity*, that is, with honour and respect. The principle of *equality* requires Indigenous knowledge, wisdom and life stories to be treated with the same respect, the same rights and social status, as any other data collected in the undertaking of any research project. For a researcher to act with *integrity* towards Indigenous knowledge, integrity must mean more than respect. It must mean being honest with the rationale

for seeking the data and with the way in which it will be used. It must also mean ensuring that the data are not manipulated to say something it never intended to say. This principle of treating the data with integrity is a quality of being honest and fair to everyone and everything involved in the research. Once the researcher has established an integral relationship with the data provided, from an Australian Indigenous perspective the data (knowledge) has agency and, thus, *self-determination*. Therefore, it will be knowledge itself that will guide the researcher in its ultimate direction and use.

### The narratives

Cherokee Professor Thomas King (2003) reminds us that

> . . . once a story is told, it cannot be called back. Once told, it is loose in the world. So you have to be careful with the stories that you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told. (p. 10)

Working with narratives is a culturally sensitive process for Aboriginal people, requiring particular care to be undertaken. Furthermore, working with stories and their narratives enables the researcher to develop very important skills in listening and reflecting (Clandinin, 2006). It is critical that the researcher understands that working with the narratives used to tell the stories does not simply mean hearing stories and interpreting them; rather, it is an invitation into the life of the storyteller. When an Indigenous person shares a story, they will include their life, their life experiences, as well as information about a particular subject, which could also include history from the beginning of time. At times, as they share their story, an opportunity for healing presents itself. Clandinin (2006) further asserts that once a person has participated in a research project the research and the researcher also become part of a new story. This new story is dependent on how the researcher handles the information and stories provided, thus having the potential to be either a positive or negative story, depending on how the participant views the way in which their information was handled. The researcher has become part of the narrative of the story, emphasising the heightened responsibilities that the research now holds as an active partner in the storytelling.

Stories and their narratives provide very versatile ways of communicating a point, as Uncle Larry demonstrated, in the course of the research project, by using of the same story three different times during the yarning process to emphasise three different aspects of his life. Therefore, it is important for the researcher be attentive when listening to stories and, especially their narratives, because potentially, the researcher can hear the same story many times with different meanings attached to the story each time, thus making coding very difficult.

### The data

The stories and their narratives shared with the researcher make up only a portion of the data to be analysed. From a research perspective, therefore, the data camp is the most important camp, as it is in this camp that research knowledge is formed, shaped and ultimately revealed. As researcher, we must be constantly aware that, everything can be considered data. Therefore, for a researcher utilising yarning as a methodology, data permeates the entire process. The things that influence the outcome of the research will be discovered within the data. The researcher, thus, needs to engage every aspect of the yarning environment during the research process, and to observe both what is being said and how it is being said, as well as accompanying body language. In addition to what is being expressed vocally, it is not unusual for an Indigenous Elder to express themselves through drawings or some other form of physical expression.

Another important source of data that is often overlooked is the data that come from the researcher themselves, because the researcher is directly involved in the yarning process and has developed a relationship both with the knowledge and with the participants. Their input into these sessions and their reflections on these sessions form part of the data, and thus, cannot be ignored or removed from the dataset. Mauthner and Doucet (2003) suggest that, when the researcher uses reflective practice as part of the research approach, the reflections become an important source of data, as they contain epistemological and ontological bias related to the researcher that cannot be ignored.

As discussed earlier, the researcher has a responsibility not only to the participant but also to the knowledge. It is here, within this camp, that relationships need to be developed with the data. With this relationship comes responsibility, and thus, throughout the yarning process, participant information that has been recorded or coded needs to be verified with the participant, potentially leading to the emergence of new data.

## The data and analysis camps

These camps reveal the roles that data fulfil (see Figure 1).

### Specific information

This is the first of a series of four camps that contain the research data. Each one contains distinct information, and thus, while being linked to all other camps, it is important to investigate each separately. However, various aspects of each camp establish the authority, validity and responsibility of the data found in each neighbouring camp. In this camp sits all the data that directly relates to the research topic. This information must be analysed using an inductive method, and the results will lead to the final conclusions and recommendations.

### Personal information

Generic information about the participants is extremely important, as it can determine the authority and the authenticity of the information being provided. In the yarns, for example, if the yarn or the research topic is specifically aimed at determining men's issues, then

gender is extremely important since, within Indigenous culture, it is inappropriate for women to speak with authority on men's issues and for men to speak about women's issues. Location and language group are also important pieces of information, since relationship to land and kinship ties can also provide insight into the authority with which someone can speak in relation to certain topics. Indigenous knowledge is contextual and always has a custodian tasked with the responsibility of seeing that the knowledge is handled correctly.

## The yarn itself

A great deal of special information is to be found within this camp, even though, at first, this information may seem to be irrelevant or of a very superficial nature. This is often due to the very nature of Indigenous ways of storytelling. Indigenous knowledge is often described as cyclical in nature, generally starting at a surface level and then spiralling down to deeper and more meaningful levels (Yunkaporta & McGinty, 2009). It is important to note that Indigenous narratives generally include a great deal of body language that needs to be considered part of the dataset. Body language will provide important analytical tool to determine what is being said or demonstrated throughout the yarning process. As stated previously, it is important to remember when using the yarning process as a data collection method, that everything is to be considered as data.

## Data repository

Although information in this camp does not directly relate to the research topic, it can nonetheless influence the data used as part of the research. Many protocols need to be observed before information is recorded. Furthermore, simply because information is provided, the researcher does not always have permission to utilise it. Non-public information or gender-specific information needs to be handled with extreme care, as the release of such information can violate relationships not only between the researcher and the participants, but also between the participants and the wider community.

Once a relationship has been established, an Elder may use research opportunities to place knowledge into a secure recorded space, thus treating the research and the researcher as an opportunity for knowledge repository. Therefore, simply receiving this information does not give the researcher permission to use it, let alone ownership of such information: its ownership always remains with the traditional custodians of the information. Occasionally, an Elder will give permission for the use of some non-public information to be utilised under strict conditions: for example, either only men or women may access the information under certain conditions. It is, thus, extremely important that information is consistently recorded and handed back to the Elder concerned prior to it being used.

All stored information can be used by the participant as a record of their family histories and can, thus, be used to contribute to their ongoing wellbeing. Information released

in yarning sessions can sometimes have potential legal ramifications. It is important to note that, in these instances, the researcher is not required to report it or discuss it any further.

## Further yarns

Throughout the yarning process, it often occurs that information shared or concepts that have been discussed require further investigation, even though they are not immediately relevant to the current topic being discussed. Because it is inappropriate for the researcher to interrupt or redirect the yarning process, any questions or comments thus need to be held over until the end of the yarning session or, alternatively, another time needs to be arranged for another yarning session on the different topic. When this happens, the research process will need to start again from the beginning.

## The processing and reporting camps

Communicating the outcomes of a yarning research project should reflect the relationship the researcher has developed with the knowledge, in the process of revealing and reporting its message. Any final recommendations must always be made in conjunction with the participants (see Figure 1).

## Coding and processing

Particularly, when using qualitative research methods, coding is an inductive process that requires both de-contextualisation and deconstructing (Beattie et al., 2004; Pérez-Arce, 1999; Riessman, 2005; Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). From an Indigenous perspective however, it is important that during this entire process narrative data remain contextualised (Simpson, 2000). In doing so, the researcher has an opportunity to relive the yarn. Working with both a printed transcript of the yarning session and the audio and/or video recordings of the session gives the researcher access not only to the written word or the words that were spoken, but also to the vocal inflections and tone of the stories that were shared and the information they contained. Video recordings, if available, will also show body language and gestures that accompany the stories. Body language and gestures are essential parts of the narrative telling of the story. Everything occurring during a yarning session, therefore, is to be seen as part of the data, and thus, having direct influence on coding and processing.

In attempting to understand the data and its knowledge, it is also important that the researcher gives the data the time it needs to reveal its knowledge, since knowledge, from an Indigenous perspective, has independent agency. The genuine relationship the researcher has, by this stage, developed with knowledge requires such knowledge to be treated as able to determine the appropriate time and conditions under which to reveal itself. As Starbuck (1986) noted, "[r]esearch progress ultimately depends on the

sincerity and good judgement of those who do the research . . ." (p. 161).

Once the researcher is satisfied with the level of coding that has taken place, and has extrapolated the information around the topic being discussed, further consultation with the participant needs to take place. While this is still part of the original yarning process, it allows the researcher to ensure that data remain contextualised. It also builds trust with the participant, by consulting them at every stage of the analytic process, and it ensures the trustworthiness of the research and the data. This process allows participants to see firsthand that their information has not been misrepresented, and that they have input into the outcome and observations regarding their information.

### Recommendations

All recommendations need to be filtered through the participants and their communities. This is a three-part process. First, participants are presented the recommendations in a form that they can understand and relate to. Their comments, thoughts, concerns and understandings are then synthesised into the recommendations. Second, the community is presented with the results and recommendations in a manner or a form that the community understands. This may be done through a yarning circle or visualising recommendations into artwork. Third, funding bodies, universities or controlling bodies are presented the final recommendations as a written report once the comments and feedback from the communities have been synthesised into the final recommendations.

### Reporting

The results of a research study and its synthesis are most commonly presented in the form of reports, papers for publication, or theses. However, it is important to honour the participants and their communities by providing feedback or results in a manner that is culturally appropriate, often in forms other than a report, published article or thesis. As an example, a number of diagrams were placed throughout the thesis from which this article emerges (Barlo, 2016) to assist with explanations of dignity, the yarning space and the methodology. Results can also be presented in the form of a ceremony as a way of honouring the participants for sharing their gift of knowledge.

### The wider community camp

The wider community may include universities, research institutions and funding bodies, and each of these institutions will have their own requirements and guidelines to determine what constitutes acceptable presentation of results and reports (see Figure 1).

### Conclusion

At its core, yarning is a relational methodology for transferring Indigenous knowledge that dates back to the origins of time. Indigenist research methodologies are increasingly using yarning as a respectful manner of inquiry, and this article outlines a methodology developed to explicitly incorporate yarning within any Indigenist research, outlining a framework to ensure respectful research. The principles and protocols developed to protect both the yarning space and the knowledge shared evolved after extensive yarning sessions with Elders and participatory analysis of themes that were common to all such sessions. Finally, within an Indigenous perspective knowledge is a dynamic living entity with the ability to release information in a manner that safeguards its integrity. However, a culturally safe platform is required for this to happen. Such a platform is secured through the process of yarning in a safe place. Ultimately, if knowledge has agency and is therefore alive, one of the most important relationships that the researcher needs to develop is with the data, information or knowledge itself.

### ORCID iDs

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