

KEY INFORMANT
**INTERVIEW
TECHNIQUES**
AND STORYTELLING METHODS

A guide to collecting
qualitative data and
stories in Indigenous and
community settings



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Key informant interviews are qualitative, in-depth interviews of individuals selected for their first-hand knowledge about a topic of interest. Interviewers generally have an interview guide, with structured questions, to ask the informant. Typically, interviews are semi-structured conversations that allow for the free flow of ideas and information. Interviews are usually recorded, with the interviewee's permission. Once recorded, interviews are transcribed (typed out) and analyzed using qualitative analysis methods. Results are then shared with the informants and intended audience!

SEVEN INTERVIEW TECHNIQUES

1

ESTABLISH RAPPORT

Introduce yourself, explain the purpose of the interview, the intended use of the information, and assurances of confidentiality. You can use the interview guide for this.

2

RECORD THE INTERVIEW

Ask the informant for permission to record the interview. Let them know that the interview will be accessible only by the evaluation team and will be housed in a secure file. And that responses will remain anonymous. Sometimes in interviews informants may be asked if they are okay being identified – this will be discussed and clearly lined out in the consent/ interview guide.

3

HOW YOU ASK THE QUESTION MATTERS

Ask the question the way the interview guide is formatted for consistency across interviews.

4

USE PROBING TECHNIQUES

Encourage informants to detail the basis for their conclusions and recommendations. For example, an informant's comment, "I think the program has really changed things around here," can be probed for more details, such as "What changes have you noticed?," or "Can you give me some specific examples?"

5

MAINTAIN A NEUTRAL ATTITUDE

Interviewers should be sympathetic listeners and avoid giving the impression of having strong views on the subject matter under discussion. Neutrality is so important, because sometimes informants will say what they think the interviewer wants to hear. But we want to hear their genuine thoughts, opinions, and expertise!

6

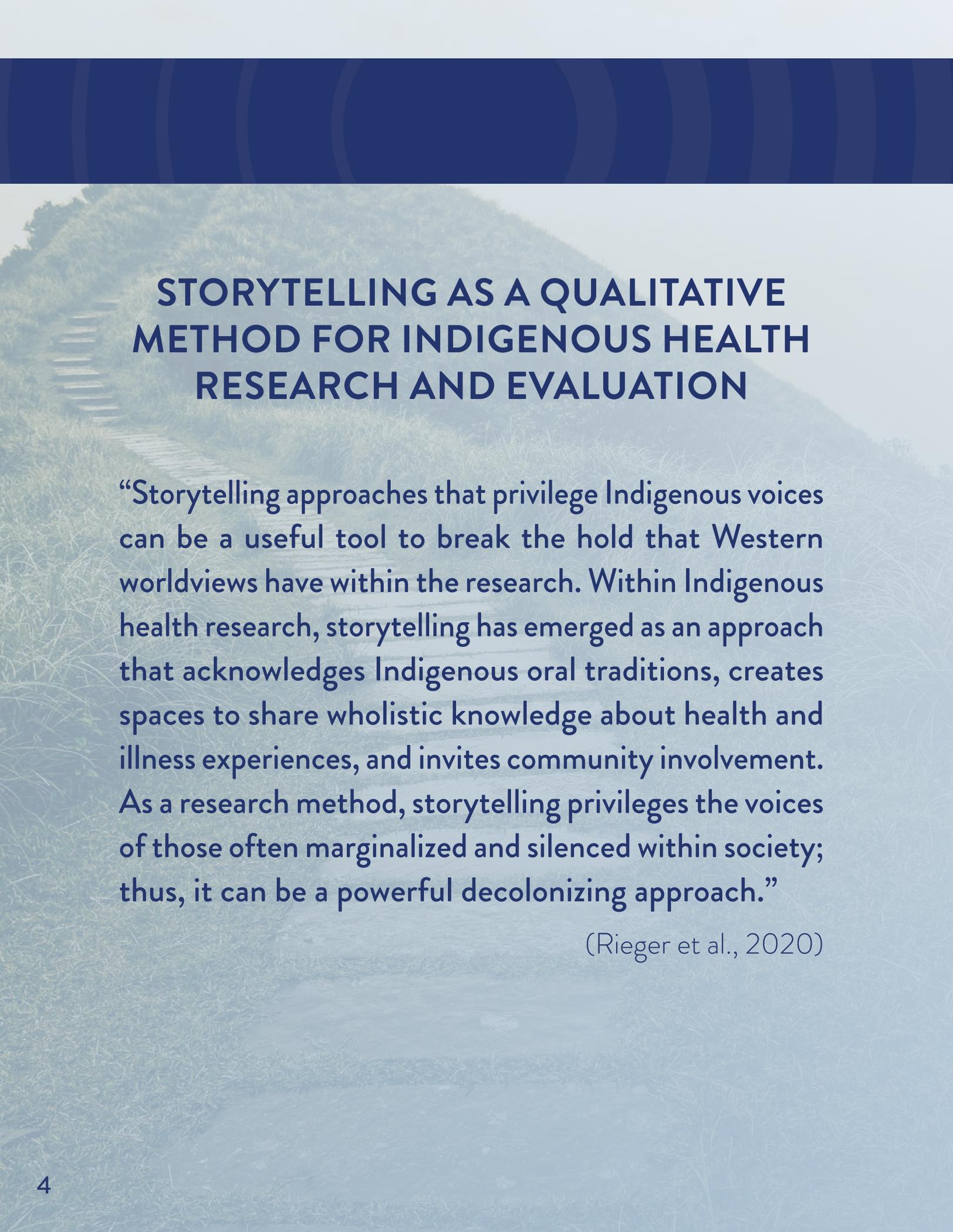
TAKE NOTES

Notes can be important. Be sure to let the informant know that you might take notes during the interview. You can develop the notes in more detail after the session, but notes can speak to the things you feel, hear, or observed during the interview. For example, the informant may express a hopeful sentiment, be engaged through body language – or nervous – or seem reserved or distracted. These can be important considerations in analyzing and reporting results.

7

THANK THE INFORMANT

Lastly, once you've asked the questions, probed for more information and you have all the information you need, then you are ready to close out the interview. Thank the informant for their time, provide an incentive, and close out the interview in the best way!

A stone path leads up a grassy hillside under a blue sky. The path is made of flat stones and is surrounded by tall grass. The sky is a clear, light blue. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

STORYTELLING AS A QUALITATIVE METHOD FOR INDIGENOUS HEALTH RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

“Storytelling approaches that privilege Indigenous voices can be a useful tool to break the hold that Western worldviews have within the research. Within Indigenous health research, storytelling has emerged as an approach that acknowledges Indigenous oral traditions, creates spaces to share wholistic knowledge about health and illness experiences, and invites community involvement. As a research method, storytelling privileges the voices of those often marginalized and silenced within society; thus, it can be a powerful decolonizing approach.”

(Rieger et al., 2020)

CRITICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CONDUCTING INDIGENOUS HEALTH RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

1

Involve protocols and practices for mutuality, power-sharing, and reciprocity

Often western qualitative research involves a critical approach -where information is named, transformed, changed, and interpreted by the researcher - who has their own form of biases, privilege, viewpoints that are inadvertently influencing results. if unchecked, can align more with a colonial legacy that normalizes dispossession, assimilation, or appropriation for the sake of “progress” or “enlightenment.”

2

Decolonize research approaches – prioritize Indigenous values, epistemologies, and histories.

This, done with the aim to build relationships and mutual trust and respect, is an important model when conducting research with Indigenous communities. It is imperative to recognize the western research approaches and distinct differences between a western narrative approach and Indigenous storytelling.

Western narrative approach –defined as a bounded and structured tool or practice with particular components, mechanisms, and outputs in which, storytelling, the performance of narrative, is primarily an expression or process of self–individual discovery and meaning-making.

Indigenous storytelling method - is grounded in a unique history and trajectory, revealing value-systems and ways of knowing of diverse Indigenous peoples. It allows for a narrative constructed by the community or individuals rather than a researcher’s voice.

3

Engagement and collaboration

Storytelling as method includes engaging participants in participatory processes. This can be in the form of participatory action research (PAR), or community based participatory research (CBPR) and includes engaging communities in development, design, collective interpretation, understanding of the findings, and action steps.

4

Engage in co-construction of findings

Engagement is at the heart of PAR. Researchers and evaluators engage participants in the analysis by reporting preliminary impressions and the potential themes, overviews of previous interviews. Engagement allows participants to give feedback, identify key ideas that need refining, and emphasize the themes and ideas that resonate.

“What data is collected is influenced by one’s worldview and epistemological assumptions, and subsequently shapes the interpretation of findings.”

- (Rieger et. al., 2020)

5

Reciprocal relationships

Knowledge is shared through relationship and transparent knowledge exchange. This is an important approach in research with all communities.

INTERVIEWS AS STORIES

Interviews can be a way of integrating oral storytelling into research and evaluation. Storytelling can take place by one-on-one interviews, talking circles, community forums, and can engage cultural and traditional practices of the community you are working with. Community feedback on the interview guide will occur before finalization of the interview questions or content. Transparency and reciprocity are important in the interview process. Discuss the process of community engagement, how the study or evaluation came about, purposes behind the work, and the next steps and process of reciprocity to co-create findings. This process begins at the start of the research or evaluation, translates into the interviews and methods used, and is carried forward in analysis, interpretation, reporting results, and actionable next steps.

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