

# L'Année PhiLanthropique The PhiLanthropic Year

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PhiLab

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**À propos du PhiLab | About PhiLab**

Le Réseau canadien de recherche partenariale sur la philanthropie (PhiLab), anciennement Laboratoire montréalais de recherche sur la philanthropie canadienne, a été pensé en 2014 dans le cadre de la conception de la demande de financement du projet développement de partenariat CRSH intitulé « Innovation sociale, changement sociétal et Fondations subventionnaires canadiennes ». Ce financement a été reconduit en 2018 sous le nom d'« Évaluation du rôle et des actions de fondations subventionnaires canadiennes en réponse à l'enjeu des inégalités sociales et des défis environnementaux ». Depuis ses débuts, le Réseau constitue un lieu de recherche, de partage d'information et de mobilisation des connaissances des fondations canadiennes. Des recherches conduites en partenariat permettent la coproduction de nouvelles connaissances dédiées à une diversité d'acteurs : des représentants gouvernementaux, des chercheurs universitaires, des représentants du secteur philanthropique et leurs organisations affiliées ou des partenaires.

Le Réseau regroupe des chercheurs, des décideurs et des membres de la communauté philanthropique à travers le monde afin de partager des informations, des ressources et des idées.

The Canadian network of partnership-oriented research on philanthropy (PhiLab), previously called the Montreal Research Laboratory on Canadian philanthropy, was thought up in 2014 as part of the conception of a funding request by the NRCC partnership development project called "Social innovation, social change, and Canadian Grantmaking Foundations". From its beginning, the Network was a place for research, information exchange and mobilization of Canadian foundations' knowledge. Research conducted in partnership allows for the co-production of new knowledge dedicated to a diversity of actors: government representatives, university researchers, representatives of the philanthropic sector and their affiliate organizations or partners.

The Network brings together researchers, decision-makers and members of the philanthropic community from around the world in order to share information, resources, and ideas.



Social Sciences and Humanities  
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# ÉTUDES DE CAS | CASE STUDIES

Trois études de cas vous sont présentées : une sur la narration et la réflexivité en philanthropie, une autre sur le transfert du pouvoir décisionnel dans les mains des communautés, et une dernière sur une communauté de pratique portant sur la philanthropie et l'équité.

Three case studies are presented here: One on storytelling and reflexivity in philanthropy, another on placing decisions in communities' hands, and a final piece on a Community of Practice focused on Philanthropy and Equity.

Artiste | Artist: Kai Yun Ching



# ÉTUDES DE CAS | CASE STUDIES

## Storytelling and reflexivity: The hunter's stories that inspired an axiological angst

By Shelley T. Price, B.Comm., MBA, PhD  
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Shelley T. Price is a bi-racial Inuk woman born in Labrador, Canada. She currently resides in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. Shelley's work calls for trauma informed and culturally humble approaches to leadership. She often works within the philanthropic landscape especially with organizations whose purpose is to nurture social and/or environmental justice.

### Introduction

Using an auto-ethnographic approach, I share with you how storytelling and reflexivity helped me to untangle some of my axiological angsts related to philanthropy as practice; rather, *philanthropy as ceremony*. Axiology asks a researcher to consider the purpose or worthiness of research. "The problems and issues axiology investigates have been with us from

the moment [hu]man[s] began to reflect upon [the] conditions of [their] li[ves], the structure of reality, the order of nature and [hu]man's place in it" (Hart, 1971, p. 29). To answer my questions on what makes research a worthy practice, I looked to my father's hunting stories. I hope to demonstrate to you that just as Wilson (2008) describes research as ceremony, hunting is also ceremony. I also share how I depend on my axiological angst to guide my research journeys and tread lightly and heartfully through the stories of the lives of those working in and interacting with the philanthropic sector. When they (research, hunting, and philanthropy) are practiced with deep love and reflexivity, each can nourish the hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits of those participating in it.

Stories are gifts from our lived experiences and auto-ethnographic research offers us opportunities to engage with the archives of stories that have been

shared with us and lived by us. When Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) called upon scholars to decolonize methodologies, I wonder whether she knew her name would be used by the next generations of Indigenous scholars in such admiration and gratitude. I ponder, "Would she have thought that we would utilize these decolonized methodologies to explore the philanthropic landscape?" Maybe not, but perhaps she would. Her call to decolonize methodologies was broad and to the entirety of Academia, so why would she not have imagined it reaching this space?

In my research practice, I attempt to travel quietly through the stories that are gifted to me, similar to the way my father hunts. I have reflected on his stories to learn more about research in the philanthropic sector. This story reflects the meaning that I have drawn from my father's stories, this does not necessarily represent a descriptive truth; rather it is my understanding of the truth.

### My story of my father's hunting stories<sup>1</sup>

My view of research has been greatly shaped by my father's beliefs on hunting. Hunting is my father's religion and nature is his place of worship. I learned from my parents how to see myself in relation to the land. I learned that I live within the cycles of nature and learned that I must respect natural, social, and spiritual laws. I grew up in a Catholic community; I was baptized United, but I did not go to church. My parents brought us to nature; the only church I have ever known. My father yearns for hunting season every year. Growing up, hunting was a story told more routinely than (I imagine) the average Christian family would discuss the Bible. I learned about the world from the stories of hunting and the ethic of hunting. My father had a special and specific way of hunting. He learned from his Father and Grandfather and Grandfathers before them. For him hunting is about his self, his wisdom, his will, and the will of nature. He sees himself as part of nature and with that he accepts a great deal of responsibility. I can close my eyes and picture him from his stories; I can tell you his way. I know his movements from the stories he told. He prepares methodically every year for his sacred ritual. He has prepared his spaces; he walks through the woods quietly in the dark, the kinds of dark that many do not understand for the woods are not friendly to those who do not know them...the kinds of dark that to many would bring about their

deepest fears. He is so quiet, the kind of quiet that you cannot imagine in nature. The thick brush and fallen forest floor are so noisy in interactions. You cannot go through these places and spaces quietly and yet he does. He travels long distances to find *the* place, *his* place, the *right* place for him...then he waits. These are moments where you are now in your place and the sun has come up and the morning dew is forming; the kinds of fall mornings where you breathe cold. He sits quietly striving for nothingness except being one with the sounds of nature. To disturb nothing and to be traceless...no smell, no sound, no movement...to be present and absent from time, space, and plane. His presence in the space and his impacts are so minimal. He waits patiently, always ready until the ground is warm and the dew has dissipated. He then journeys back, the same way he came, quietly and tracelessly. He continues this ritual daily until a deer comes to him. He wants the first, but waits for the right deer. If the deer is not positioned with a clear and certain shot, this is not the right deer. If the deer is too young or too old, this is not the right deer. He has his rules and he is patient for his deer. Yes, he worries that this year is the year he will not harvest. And for every deer who<sup>2</sup> comes and goes and does not meet his ethical requirements, he gets more worried. Yes, he also worries that the hunters who practice techniques that increase their likeliness of harvest are going to get all of the deer this year. He also worries that those techniques affect the herd population.



Deer and Dad ~ 1977

But for him, his ethic is in his practice and not in the judgment of other practices. He hunts to feed his heart, mind, body, and spirit and he does it so eloquently. I would be remiss if I did not say that he



Left to Right: Nan – maternal grandmother, Deer, Mom, Melanie Price (sister) | Feeding all of our families ~ 1982

also hunts to feed the hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits of his family. When I bring my son to visit my parents, he loves Grampy's deer. If you were to watch the way my Dad cooks and the joy he radiates when he is feeding his family, you would know that for him the way he hunts, his ethic of hunting allows him to experience a deep connectedness to the hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits of his family.

### Axiological Angst

The self-questioning that auto-ethnography demands is extremely difficult. So is confronting things about yourself that are less than flattering. Believe me, honest auto-ethnographic exploration generates a lot of fears and self-doubts and emotional pain. Just when you think you can't stand the pain anymore, well that's when the real work has only begun. Then there's the vulnerability of revealing yourself, not being able to take back what you've written or having any control over how your readers interpret it. It's hard not to feel your life is being critiqued as well as your work. It can be humiliating. Of course, there are rewards, too. For example, you come to understand yourself in deeper ways. And with understanding yourself comes understanding others. Auto-ethnography provides an avenue for doing something meaningful for yourself and the world (Ellis, 1999, p. 672).

As I read through this story (over and over), I spent time with it, remembering each time my father shared his hunting stories. I dove into the archives of my life without appropriating or mining the stories. For me, to think of using the stories causes me axiological angst. I get a knot in my stomach and weakness throughout my entire body. I confess I struggle greatly with generalized anxiety disorder, so these

feelings of angst are not a new experience specific to research contexts. That said, when they arise during the research planning process, I do not ignore the discomforts. Wilson (2008) describes axiology as "the ethics or morals that guide the search for knowledge and judge which information is worthy of searching for" (p. 34). I use auto-ethnography as a way of doing something meaningful for both myself and the world. I examine the interconnectivities between myself and the lessons I learn through my own and others' lived experiences. I sit in the discomfort of *not knowing* for however long I need to in order to allow the story to reveal a respectful approach. I do not rush an answer. I hold space to let my relationship to the story, storyteller, audiences, and socio-political discourses guide me in how to plant a seed for better appreciating the complexity of the angst.

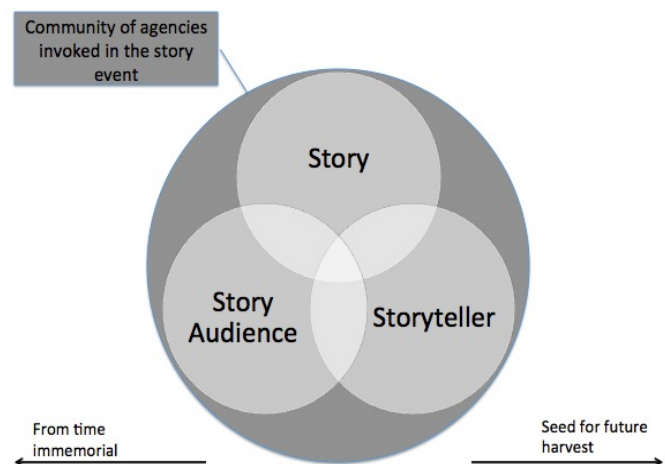


Figure 1: Holistic network of influencers (*Shared with permission from Price, Hartt, Cole & Barnes, 2019, p. 22*)

### Hunting, Research, and Philanthropy as Ceremony

My view of research has been greatly shaped by my father's beliefs on hunting. In particular when studying philanthropy, I remember both the givers and receivers as equals. In the following table, I will attempt to show you my process, but also ask you to remember that the time it takes to produce this table is much greater than the time it takes to read it. I sit with each word, phrase, and idea in the story and let my heart, mind, body, and spirit build the roadmap that interconnects the story with my questions. While I share with you my story, my aspiration is that you will be saving space for your own thoughts, feelings, stories, and lessons.

Table 1: *Hunting, Research, and Philanthropy as Ceremony*

Hunting Story (Words, Phrases, Ideas)	Philanthropy (Givers and Receivers)	Research in Philanthropy (Axiological Angst)
"Nature is his place of worship... hunting his sacred ritual".	I value philanthropic exchanges that are treated with sacred integrity for all participating in the philanthropic sector.	I feel more comfortable when I treat research as sacred and stories emerging from the philanthropic sector as sacred.
"See myself in relation to the land. I learned that I live within the cycles of nature and learned that I must respect natural, social, and spiritual laws"	The philanthropic sector lives within a capitalistic system and hence it often perpetuates the cycles of power that it intends to disrupt unless it respects natural, social, and spiritual laws of equality of all beings and balance within the planetary boundaries.	I see myself in relation to the stories, storytellers, audiences, and the socio-political discourses shaping the sociology of knowledge...working to reveal the cycles of natural, social, and spiritual laws...resisting inequalities and exploitation.
"the ethic of hunting"	There are philanthropic organizations who are working to nurture an ethic of philanthropy as ceremony.	There are moral, amoral, and immoral approaches to study in the philanthropic sector.
"He sees himself as part of nature and with that he accepts a great deal of responsibility".	As a researcher in the philanthropic landscape, I must be reflexive of my relational responsibility to all those within the philanthropic landscape.	I am a part of the research community and I must be reflexive of the power that comes with this position.
"He prepares methodically every year"	Interacting in philanthropic spaces requires preparation: wholly and consciously with heart, mind, body, and spirit.	Research takes planning and there is a great deal of work to do before interacting with peoples' stories.
"quiet"	Is there room within the philanthropic sector for quiet? Funding is heavily dependent on proof of outcomes. Often we indignify (take dignity away from) those whom we support by making their needs visible through our campaigns.	In research, is there room for quiet? How we ascertain permission, how we maintain anonymity and confidentiality is integral. What we choose to reveal is no longer in our control once it is said or written.
"to be present and absent from time, space, and plane."	How in philanthropy can we be both present for those who need us, but absent enough that we are not imposing our rules or values on them?	My angst is reduced when I am not imposing on others, but co-producing process and outcomes.
"He is patient"	Being patient in philanthropy is important, when we impose our timelines on others there may be unintentional consequences.	In research, we need to be patient especially in community work as we are dependent on the contributions of others. Managing expectations helps with the angst.
"He also worries that the hunters who practice techniques that increase their likeliness of harvest are going to get all of the deer this year."	There are always ways of accessing resources that do not fit within our ethical practice, we can choose those techniques that work best within our ethic.	There are research practices that are more widely accepted; choosing to study outside of those is nevertheless a valid choice.
"the joy he radiates when he is feeding his family"	All aspects of philanthropy can be filled with joy. Often givers are glorified, while receivers are left to feel indignified. We can nurture joy for all those participating in the philanthropic landscape.	The goal is that both the researcher and the community of research are left with joy or something of value.



Left to Right: Shelley and Jason Price, Front: Black Bear  
We feel like superheroes ~ 1978

## Conclusion

I have attempted to demonstrate how stories can speak to the relationships between givers and receivers in the philanthropic landscape and how stories can be guides for exploring thoughts and feelings around what is worthy of researching. I learned that my axiological angst is my moral compass and that I can hone my practice with reflexivity, patience, and planning for the integrity of my respect to natural, social, and spiritual laws.

I have also attempted to demonstrate that this approach to storytelling research considered stories as relationships and they are like mirrors revealing to us parts of our own selves: our hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits. When we interact with a story, we as the audience get to engage with it and we experience thoughts and feelings that belong to us. We get to co-create the lessons we learn from the stories.

I have also attempted to demonstrate that both research and philanthropy are sacred ceremony. We need to reflect on what and whether we are imposing upon others and using our power to control process and/or outcomes. We also need to reflect on whether our actions increase joy, ethics, and dignity for all involved.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my story. I hope I offered at least one nugget to chew on.

## Notes

- 1 With permission, as shared in Price, S (2020: 111-113) in *Storytelling Leadership: Connecting Heart, Mind, Body, and Spirit to Stories of the Old Days and Old Ways of Labrador*.
- 2 Who is often used respectfully in narrative to denote a human, but in this context the who is used to respectfully denote the deer.
- 3 I do not like the word use. This word represents extraction, and in many regards this word can denote a lack of consent.

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# L'Année PhiLanthropique

## The PhiLanthropic Year



**PhiLab**

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