

Gathering Knowledges to Inform Best Practices in Indigenous Publishing¹

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Abstract: Indigenous community members—including Elders, storytellers, writers, poets, artists, scholars, activists, editors, and publishers—have worked for decades to increase Indigenous representation in publishing. They know that storytelling is at the core of Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of life. Many feel a responsibility to share their stories, knowing that publishing in a good way—committed to Indigenous values and protocols—can promote healing and strength among Indigenous cultures and address a lack of understanding among settler Canadians about Indigenous people’s lives and experiences. By conducting interviews, reading widely, and reflecting on my own experience, I gathered knowledge about some themes, subjects, and concerns that are repeatedly raised in discussions around publishing for and by Indigenous people; this is one model for learning about sharing stories in a good way in the publishing industry.

Keywords: publishing, editing, Indigenous literatures, storytelling, protocols



Although we are born into human bodies, it’s our teachings—and our stories—that make us human.

Daniel Heath Justice, *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter* 33

My name is Rachel Taylor. My mother is Iñupiaq from Anchorage, Alaska. Her family come from the Seward Peninsula and the Diomed Islands. My father was a settler from Minnesota; his family come from

English, Scottish, and Irish descendants who settled in the eastern United States beginning about two hundred years ago. My parents raised my siblings and me in Smithers, British Columbia, Canada, on Wet'suwet'en and Gitxsan² territories where our family were uninvited guests. I have lived on the unceded traditional territories of the x^wməθkwəy̓əm, Stz'uminus, Stó:lō, Skwxwú7mesh, and Səlilwətał Nations³ as an uninvited guest for eighteen years. I live in the city; my mother was not taught Inúpiatun as a child and I have yet to learn. I am an editor and a graduate of the Master of Publishing program at Simon Fraser University.

While the storytelling protocols I learned about during my research are diverse and continuously change, Indigenous storytellers often start with who they are and where they are from, where they got the story, and why they have the right to tell it (Hill; McCall; Q. Taylor). They might add “why they feel it’s important to retell the story right now to this particular person” (McCall). Proper acknowledgment and attribution is very important in Indigenous storytelling. Dr. Ellen Rice White, also known as Kwulasulwut, was a celebrated Snuneymuxw Elder, author, and educator.⁴ She was careful to say that the stories in *Legends and Teachings of Xeel’s, the Creator* were passed to her from her grandmother, Mary Rice, and her grand-uncle, known to her as Grandpa Tommy (White cited in Archibald, Foreword xiii). As she told her friend Q’um Q’um Xiem, Dr. Jo-ann Archibald,⁵ “I could never say these stories are mine or Granny’s or Grandpa’s. Everybody knows that long ago Xeel’s, the Creator travelled from village to village. He would say, ‘I am needed. I have to go.’ These stories belonged to Xeel’s and he told them to people during his travels. We have to remember that” (qtd. in Archibald, Foreword xiii-xiv.) The practice of proper acknowledgment speaks to the power stories carry and where the power comes from. In part, this article examines why stories need protection. Publishers in Canada need guidance on working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit authors. For this study, I gathered information specifically for emerging publishing professionals about Indigenous storytelling and knowledge-keeping protocols. I interviewed people with insight and experience and extrapolated from Indigenous writings on literature, research, and education. I aimed

to practice the protocols I learned about, including proper acknowledgment (McCall), using Indigenous frameworks (Reder, “New Turf”) and research methods (Rebecca Taylor), making my own meaning from stories (Archibald, Foreword xv), fulfilling my responsibilities to those I am in relationship with (Préfontaine), obtaining continuous consent (Castleden), and avoiding hierarchical relationships (Akiwenzie-Damm 36). I did not address one of the most important protocols: to connect with the people on whose land I live and work. I hope to conduct many more interviews in the future and correct that mistake.

As part of this study, my family members and I talked about how to approach my work *as an Inuk*. I found their insights difficult to translate for others, but they informed how I thought about my writing and what was important to share. Through my talks with them I realized I would not be able to produce the list of broad recommendations I had imagined at the outset. However, I hope my work provides some resources and a research model for learners like me.

In addition to providing recommendations, I originally set out to understand Indigenous people’s lack of access to the means of production in publishing (McCall). However, I found that in my readings and interviews an underlying issue was more frequently raised: a lack of knowledge among the Canadian public—including publishers—about Canada’s ongoing colonial history and about Indigenous experiences and rights. For example, Ann Doyon, who is the marketing and sales representative at Theytus Books, the oldest Indigenous-owned and operated press in the world (Younging, “History”), told me, “We have a lot of teachers come in and they’re like, ‘OK, where do I start? How do I Indigenize my classroom?’ One of the first questions I ask is, where do you live? What’s your territory? . . . Because it’s not pan-Indianism. One size does not fit all.” This is not to say that the colonial experiences that Indigenous Peoples have in common cannot be addressed—they must, particularly if we are to address the widespread lack of understanding of those colonial experiences. This is especially true in publishing, which is so tied to education that any minority group’s lack of access to publishing perpetuates, and is perpetuated by, a lack of knowledge about that minority group. Dr. Margery Fee writes that Canadians believe “that

'their' government treats Indigenous people well—even too well.⁶ Little is taught in Canadian schools and universities that might fill the huge gap between what 'ordinary' citizens believe and what many white scholars and judges, not to mention Indigenous activists and intellectuals, are now saying" (*Literary Land Claims* 21–22). For example, says Fee, the "dominant discourse in the country that reflects and influences the opinions and behaviour of most Canadians" (21) reflects neither the 2004 statement by Canada's Supreme Court affirming that Aboriginal People "were never conquered" (*Haida Nation v. British Columbia* qtd. in Fee, *Literary Land Claims* 21) nor the Government of Canada's recognition of "the inherent right of self-government as an existing Aboriginal right under Section 35 of the Constitution Act" (Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada qtd. in Fee, *Literary Land Claims* 21).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) has given Canada a mandate to improve education about Indigenous Peoples generally (Truth 289) as well as in particular fields, such as journalism and media schools (345) and the corporate sector (354). It is a good time for the publishing industry to address its own lack of knowledge and give back to the people from whom it has taken so much.

I. Publishing and Canadian Assimilation Policies

When Indigenous authors in Canada submit their work to a publisher it is always in the context of a colonial history built on exclusion, segregation, abuses of authority, domination, and official policies of assimilation meant to destroy Aboriginal languages and cultures, remove Aboriginal peoples from their lands, disrupt familial relationships, and eliminate the special legal status of any remaining "Indian" peoples.

Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm, "We Think Differently" 30

Indigenous Peoples find their homelands around the world crossed by colonial borders but often express solidarity with each other. While working on the anthology *Read, Listen, Tell: Indigenous Stories from Turtle Island*, Gabrielle L'Hirondelle Hill strove "to include Chicano writers and Mexican writers as Indigenous writers, rather than making this divide

that ends at the Mexico-US border” (Hill). This goal of recognizing unity across borders is common among colonized Peoples who see their struggles as related. At the same time—as Doyon points out—Indigenous people also recognize that “each nation and culture is affected differently by the attempted genocide.” For example, unlike First Nations and Métis people, Inuit were largely ignored until the 1950s (Igloliorte 127) when the Canadian government became “increasingly concerned with maintaining Arctic sovereignty” (129), leading to a “period of increased and reluctant paternalism” (129). There are similarities and differences of experience for all colonized Peoples globally, and I begin this section with Hill’s, Doyon’s, and Dr. Heather Igloliorte’s points because this idea should frame my discussion of the Canadian context.

A similarity of experience is that Canadian settler colonial policies, which define the context in which publishing operates, do not represent a benevolent-yet-broken system; instead, they are part of Canada’s construction, justified by appeals to Euro-supremacist spiritual, social, and legal arguments (Truth 50). The Doctrine of Discovery (50), the legal concept of *terra nullius* (50), and the “civilizing mission” (50) are just three of “numerous arguments” (49) used to dehumanize Indigenous people in order to justify settlers taking possession of “land belonging to no one” (Younging, *Gnaritas* 173). The Indian Residential Schools are one example of a genocidal policy of viewing Indigenous Peoples as “no one.” The TRC’s final report details the role of Residential Schools in cultural genocide (Truth 2) and the severe traumatic and intergenerational effects they had, and continue to have, on survivors.

Another genocidal tactic contributing to these same legacies in Canada is “the wide-scale national apprehension of Aboriginal children by child-welfare agencies” (Truth 186). When first identified, this practice came to be known as the Sixties Scoop (186), but Fee describes how this “has since turned into the ‘Millennium Scoop’” (Fee, “Truth” 9).⁷ Child apprehension is largely driven by poverty (Sterritt), itself one effect of the many assimilation policies used to divorce Peoples from their homelands, ways of life, and traditional economies. Dr. Cindy Blackstock, Professor of Social Work at McGill University and Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, writes: “Even

taking the modest estimates of child welfare authorities, there are more First Nations children in the care of the child welfare and justice systems today than there were at the height of the residential schools era” (“First” 331). She says the reasons for this are “poverty; poor housing [including] overcrowding, black mold, lack of water, lack of sanitation, those kinds of things; and multigenerational trauma that leads to addictions” (“Cindy”). The good news, she says, is that “with the proper interventions we can deal with a lot of that. But the bad news is that the Canadian government underfunds all of those services. . . . You can do child welfare but if no one is building proper homes, and if no one is looking at the water supply, then it’s really gonna make it still hard for families to get to a place of wellness” (“Cindy”). The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society and the Assembly of First Nations filed a complaint with the Human Rights Commission in 2007, which ended in a ruling that stated the Canadian federal government “discriminates against First Nation children on reserves by failing to provide the same level of child welfare services that exist elsewhere” (Fontaine). Blackstock is still trying to make the federal government comply with the tribunal’s rulings, which she emphasizes are legally binding (Barrera).

These ongoing histories are important for settler publishers to understand, as are the ongoing traditions of Indigenous storytelling. Dr. Gregory Younging, Opaskwayak Cree professor, author, and publisher of Theytus Books, suggests that “Canadian publishers need to acknowledge that they’re on a territory that has a long storytelling tradition, and if they’re going to publish from that territory, they need to make a connection with the people there, find out a bit about their stories and their history, and maybe publish a book or two by them” (“History”). Younging sees “Indigenous publishing as an extension of Indigenous storytelling” (“History”). Dr. Deanna Reder, Associate Professor in the Indigenous Studies and English departments at Simon Fraser University and Series Editor for the Indigenous Studies Series at Wilfrid Laurier University Press, encourages her students

to enlarge the definition of literacies that can hold Indigenous philosophies, ways of knowing, and storytelling in a variety of

forms that include ones told verbally (like story cycles, hip hop, nursery rhymes, lectures, invocations); physically (dance, video games, ceremony with drumming and singing); through to writing (like short stories, petroglyphs, novels, winter counts, beading, graphic novels, carving). (“New Turf”)

Reading works from Reder, Younging, and others has helped me to understand how Indigenous writing and publishing are extensions of long-lived Indigenous traditions and practices that have survived in the face of assimilationist colonial policies.

Professor Hartmut Lutz’s writings⁸ further illuminate some of the conditions determining the relationships between Indigenous Peoples in Canada and the Canadian publishing industry. Lutz was once asked to contribute to a book on 1960s Canadian Native literature, but could find almost no fiction, poetry, or drama by Native people from that decade (Lutz, “Canadian” 167). When he recounted this to Métis writer Howard Adams, Adams replied, “We were still concerned with issues of bread and butter on the table. You cannot talk about culture or literature when you are hungry” (qtd. in Lutz 167). This is not to say that Indigenous people at that time and earlier did not write or create stories at all, but Lutz describes how “texts stemming from the oral tradition were usually collected, translated, and often heavily edited by non-Native missionaries, anthropologists and hobbyists” (*Contemporary* 87). These texts were “represented as ‘quaint’ or ‘exotic,’ [not fit] for serious literary studying” (87). Early anthologies and even some current collections print poems or songs without any storyteller attributed at all (McCall). Younging has coined the term “*gnaritas nullius*” (*Gnaritas* 175; italics in original) to describe the treatment of Indigenous knowledge as “no one’s knowledge” (175), available to be taken.

Even as Indigenous writers such as Adams, George Manuel, and Maria Campbell emerged, their work was characterized as “protest literature” (Lutz, “Personal Interview”). This characterization, while somewhat dismissive, speaks to how Indigenous-led movements in literature were part of an Indigenous social movement that has been unfolding since the 1960s across the globe (Smith 112). Colonialism was and is met with

resistance movements informed by what Linda Tuhiwai Smith calls “the survival strategies and cultural systems which have nurtured people, their values and their beliefs within their own communities, reserves, tribes and nations for over 500 years” (112). These survival strategies and cultural systems have taken many artistic forms, including writing, and have themselves shaped and influenced anti-colonial resistance movements and survival strategies. The characterization of this writing as “protest literature” hints at a Western literary approach to our writing as a sort of immature version of Western writing, happening in stages as we learn the art. Protest literature may be better understood as part of long, living artistic and cultural traditions that adapt and change; an example of passing on elements of our cultures and worldviews in new forms; and an indication of how Indigenous writers and storytellers may write as a way of fulfilling their community and relational responsibilities. Later generations of writers carry on these practices of fulfilling one’s community responsibilities and adapting to new forms of expression.

The 1970s saw the publishing of canonical Indigenous authors including “Maria Campbell, Harold Cardinal, [Mini] Aodla Freeman, Elizabeth Goudie, Alma Green, Emma LaRocque, Lee Maracle, Mike Mountain Horse, Wilfred Pelletier, Peter Pitseolak, Duke Redbird, Chief John Snow, John Tetso, Anthony Apakark Thrasher, and Jane Willis” (Lutz, “Identity” 235). The 1980s saw an “onslaught” (Younging, “History”) of Indigenous writing as more First Nations, Inuit, and Métis publishers came on the scene. Still, as a student at that time Reder found “no Indigenous writing being taught in any of [her] classes, even at the masters level” (Simon). A number of significant events led to a turning point around 1990. One was Elijah Harper’s act of resistance to the Meech Lake Accord, which put Indigenous rights on the public agenda (Lutz, “Aboriginal” 89–90). Another was the “Kanienkehaka resistance at Kanehsatake and Kahnawake” (Zig Zag), more commonly known as the Oka Crisis. These and other events catalyzed the Indigenous literary movement’s growth in Canada over the following three decades. Indigenous writing, and writing about it, increased dramatically. 1992 was a watershed year, but it did not mark a beginning—Indigenous people had been writing for generations before then. One of the goals of

Reder's research project "The People and the Text: Indigenous Writing in Northern North America up to 1992" is to create "a collaborative literary history of Indigenous texts" produced before 1992 ("About"). This project illustrates the historical and continuing resistance and advocacy of Indigenous writers, storytellers, poets, artists, Elders, students, educators, editors, publishers, activists, and others. Thanks to all of their work over generations, there is now an established market for Indigenous literatures (Reder, "Personal Interview"), which constitute a recognizable canon in their own right and "not a subgroup of CanLit" (Younging, "History").

Today, a new set of significant events is stimulating the appetite for books and stories by Indigenous people among the public and in academia (Doyon; Reder, "Personal Interview"). People want to learn how to share stories respectfully. In August 2017, settler editors and publishers quickly filled the one-week Editing Indigenous Manuscripts course at Humber College⁹ and expressed many times during the week their gratitude for the opportunity to learn. But after "so much has been taken" (Préfontaine), publishers must take time to earn trust. Indigenous voices have been ignored, whitewashed (Doyon; Préfontaine), suppressed, and stolen, not only through disregard or carelessness, but also when people have the best of intentions. The colonial context is inescapable (Akiwenzie-Damm 30). For example, when Western literary conventions, genres, and expectations are imposed on Indigenous storytelling, Indigenous perspectives can be suppressed even as they are celebrated. Publishing decisions can be loaded—whether the stories being published are traditional, contemporary, or a blend of both.

Mini Aodla Freeman is an Inuk author and playwright (Estlin) who grew up on Cape Hope Island (Freeman, *Life* 69). As a young woman she moved south to Ottawa "to work as a translator for . . . what was then the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources" (19). In her 1978 memoir *Life among the Qallunaat*, she writes about her childhood, during which she attended two Residential Schools, and her experiences in Ottawa as a young woman. She also "reflects on Inuit worldviews regarding a variety of topics ranging from child-rearing and rule-making to social decorum and intimacy, from concepts of time and space to beauty standards and prejudice, from homesickness and loss to humour and

happiness, and from memory and storytelling to politics and freedom” (Estlin). When this incredible book came out, “half of its 6,254 copies were bought by the government and hidden in a basement” (Estlin) in a building belonging to the department she had worked for (McCall), “effectively ruin[ing] its chances for success” (Furlan 124). Freeman, speculating on the likely reason for the department’s action, says:

I think they were afraid that I might talk badly about residential schools. And remember: at that time, Northern Affairs kept denying, denying about residential schools. When an Indian person came up and talked about it really badly, they would shut them up. And then, I think they thought I wrote something bad about residential schools, which I should have, but I didn’t [laughing]. I think that was the worry, and when they discovered there wasn’t something about residential schools, they decided to put it out. (“One Day”)

Life among the Qallunaat has since been re-released in the University of Manitoba Press’ *First Voices, First Texts* series in a new edition that “seeks to restore the author’s agency and original intents” (Furlan 125). But the actions of the department left their mark. First, the squashed distribution means the community uptake of the book at the moment of publication cannot be replicated; Freeman’s contemporaries at that moment cannot read it as they would have then. Second, as Freeman discussed in 2016 at the Indigenous Literary Studies Association gathering in Calgary, she paid a personal cost to see her book published only for it to disappear (Freeman et al.).

Canadian publishers also have the potential to enact permanent harm. (A note to readers: this paragraph contains a reference to sexual assault.) In the 1973 classic autobiography *Halfbreed*, Métis author Maria Campbell says, “I write this for all of you, to tell you what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman in our country” (qtd. in Reder and Shield 8). Alix Shield, a research assistant at “The People and the Text,” recently unearthed the original manuscript of the autobiography (Reder and Shield). (While Maria Campbell supported Reder and Shield’s research and gave them permission to publish an article about her story, “she does not wish to

be contacted by members of the public, academics, or the press” [Reder and Shield].) Shield discovered how the editors at McClelland & Stewart actively suppressed a key part of Campbell’s story by deciding to remove a passage contained in the manuscript, against Campbell’s insistence that it remain (Lutz, *Contemporary* 42). In the passage, Campbell describes being raped by Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers in her home at the age of fourteen (Reder and Shield). Shield notes: “That Campbell was even willing to share the rape publicly is extraordinary” (Reder and Shield), and in fact, at her next opportunity to revise the manuscript before publication in 1973, Campbell put the passage back in once more (Reder and Shield). However, the editorial team took it out a final time, and the book was printed with the passage omitted against her will and without consulting her again. At that time, editor David Berry wrote to Campbell, “We made very few changes in the manuscript, and since there was a big rush to get it to the printer I didn’t think it would be worthwhile to send it back to you” (qtd. in Reder and Shield). The editorial team downplayed (or did not grasp) the importance of the change and denied her the opportunity to consent to the change before print. Campbell told Shield that she had once asked Jack McClelland for the excised manuscript but “he said he had destroyed it so I wouldn’t get into trouble” (qtd. in Reder and Shield).

This story—both what happened in the excised passage, and the excision of the passage—is part of “what it is like to be a Halfbreed woman” in Canada. The harm done by silencing a survivor is immeasurable; when done in an act of publishing, the harm is compounded and changes the historical record. Even with the excision of the passage, *Halfbreed* deservedly became a classic autobiography that has been read by generations of Canadians over nearly five decades. Doyon reflects on how police violence may have come to be understood differently had the publisher not silenced Campbell: “How many people could have related to it? How many people could have been moved by the story to take action on things like starlight rides, midnight rides?”¹⁰ If this story had been present in such a successful and widely taught book, how might this have informed Canadians’ understanding of decades of police inaction on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls?

This story demonstrates that Canadians have a selective “appetite” (Younging, “History”) for Indigenous trauma. The marketing plan for *Halfbreed* relied on the “major theme of injustice to be promoted personally by the author” (Reder and Shield). But the incident with the RCMP was too much injustice. This story highlights the distinction in publishing between marketable and unmarketable trauma; the role that publishing plays in Canadians’ education about Indigenous experiences; and a willingness on the part of publishers in Canada to enact injustice against Indigenous authors to the detriment of all. Mini Aodla Freeman’s and Maria Campbell’s experiences provide context that helps us understand the historical conditions in which Indigenous people and Canadian publishers continue to operate. It is especially critical that publishers pay attention and respect the roles Indigenous stories can play in relaying buried truths and beginning a process of healing, while also keeping in mind the vast diversity between and within Peoples and communities.

II. What Stories Can Be

I have come to believe that a story is not a thing the way we think of it in the West. Perhaps it is like the land in that way.

Warren Cariou¹¹

My focus is not on the literary characteristics and devices found in Indigenous storytelling—for example, the way narratives can resemble circles or spirals more than lines (Archibald, *Indigenous* 1). These particularities of Indigenous literatures and oratures are interesting and important, but I am concerned here with the functions that stories may serve as forms of knowledge sharing, education, and healing. When I talk about Indigenous stories, I include traditional and contemporary ones, because both are valid¹² and important, and because it is not always obvious when a story involves traditional knowledge and oral traditions (Younging, *Elements* 44). For example, Younging describes the “Indigenous Voice” as a way of writing that “involves combining and extending Traditional Knowledge and Oral Traditions with new ideas and expressions” (44). Hill points out that we have a tendency to think of “Indigenous stories” as a certain kind of story, what might be

called a myth or legend: “People can tend to privilege certain sorts of Indigenous stories, like traditional stories that are about supernatural characters or something. But just as important are stories about politics, and stories about family, and stories about everyday things. For Indigenous people, stories are a form of knowledge.” In other words, Indigenous stories have a special relationship to knowledge. We tend in the West to treat knowledge differently from stories; Igloliorte notes that “Western discourse often separates, classifies, or compartmentalizes its objects of study” (125). It seems to me that in Indigenous epistemologies, knowledge is holistic. Stories transmit all kinds of knowledge (Rebecca Taylor), and one story can contain knowledge from what we might think of as many different disciplines. Hill explains that a story is not just literature or orature: “It’s also the politics, and as Leslie Marmon Silko says, it’s recipes, it’s directions to places, it’s knowledge of our lineage, genealogy, it’s biology, plant uses, and things like that. All of that is in a story.” Hill notes that settler publishers might avoid this tendency to focus on only certain kinds of stories by seeking ongoing involvement from Indigenous people on publishing decisions.

Dr. Keavy Martin stresses the need for a movement toward renaming what have previously been called myths and crafts as “Indigenous intellectual traditions” (Fagan et al. 22).¹³ This is not to say that the old names are never to be used, but as Martin writes, “[m]yths are easy for the university to sideline, but *intellectual traditions* it must contend with” (Fagan et al. 22; emphasis in original). Dr. Val Napoleon and Dr. Hadley Friedland’s discussion of “Indigenous legal traditions” (725) provides context for how and why stories transmit legal and other knowledge:

As most Indigenous societies are characterized by the absence of centralized, state authorities, they require decentralized and accessible forms of public memory (i.e., oral histories and stories, among other tools). Stories are forms of legal precedent that can be drawn on in order to legitimately resolve issues in decentralized legal orders. Some stories are formal and collectively owned (e.g., Gitksan *adaawk*), others are in the form

of ancient and recent legal cases (e.g., Gitksan and Cree law cases), and others record relationships and obligations, decision making and resolutions, legal norms, authorities, and legal processes. (739)

This shows how Indigenous people recognize stories as important historical records. I learned from Dr. Sophie McCall that the telling of a story can also be a way of enacting sovereignty (McCall). For example, to assert their Aboriginal title over their traditional territories, “Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en elders testified about their land using oral histories and in their own languages” in the 1997 Supreme Court of Canada case *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* (Beaudoin).

A storyteller may fulfill responsibilities to younger generations in their Nation and/or community by passing down cultural knowledge; they may fulfill their responsibilities to previous generations by making sure the legacies of storytellers who have passed on will survive (Préfontaine). Stories help us fulfill our responsibilities by passing on knowledge about our “relationships and obligations” to each other (Napoleon and Friedland 739), to our non-human relations, and to the world we live in. In *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, Dr. Daniel Heath Justice argues that literatures help us with questions like “How Do We Behave as Good Relatives?”, “How Do We Become Good Ancestors?”, and “How Do We Learn to Live Together?” (28). So in addition to systems of knowledge and legal and intellectual traditions, we can understand stories as playing another role: they are a way that Indigenous people can fulfill their responsibilities to their human and non-human relations.

Napoleon and Friedland point out that “greater recognition and use of Indigenous laws in Canada requires more than simply uncovering pristine laws in protective bubbles to isolate them from the damages of colonization. It is not an exercise in legal archaeology” (740). The approach in the field of Indigenous law that Napoleon and Friedland characterize as “archaeological” echoes a historical and ongoing tendency in publishing to represent Indigenous Peoples and stories as frozen in the past (Younging, “History”). Harmful stories have long positioned Indigenous people as primitive and inferior, and therefore belonging to

the past (Vowel 165–67) or even not human (Smith 26). This positioning justifies the historic and ongoing colonial theft of Indigenous lands and disrespect of Indigenous human rights. Indigenous Peoples and their cultures are living, vibrant, and resilient, and are capable of change and adaptation (Australia 12). Dr. Jo-ann Archibald offers an alternative to the “archaeological” approach to making meaning from stories. She says of the years she spent learning from Elders:

What I really learned from them was the process of understanding stories. A person may come across an Indigenous story and think there’s not much to that story. But, if they really understood the traditional process of making meaning through story, they’d see that these stories are quite powerful. That was why I spent years working with Indigenous elder storytellers: to learn about making meaning with and through stories for educational purposes. I termed that “Indigenous story work”¹⁴ because at our cultural gatherings we usually had a spokesperson who stood up and said, “My dear friends the work is about to begin.” (qtd. in Lougheed)

The need to find alternatives to archaeological approaches applies not only to law but to stories. A good alternative approach would recognize that stories are important in themselves, and not only for the information they contain or the roles that they play.

In our interview, my brother, Quvi Taylor, talked about how publishing needs to change so that “success isn’t measured by how many people you reach, but whether you reach the right people.” He talked about our great-great-grandfather Angokwazhuk “Happy Jack” Omilak and his engravings, which our sister, Rebecca Taylor, taught us about following her masters’ research with our family in Alaska (my first exposure to Indigenous methods of research). She learned, among many things, where our family’s name came from: a story that was depicted in one of Happy Jack’s engravings. Quvi said of this carving and story: “There’s information in it. Those things are a touchstone for us, and we can interpret them. But they actually exist without the interpretation. And the interpretation helps us give some meaning to it, but [it’s important

to be] able to have the story in a form like that” (Q. Taylor). Dr. Val Napoleon—who was a friend of my father’s mother, Peggy, who was a friend of Jeannette Armstrong, who helped found the En’owkin Centre, where Theytus Books is housed, and where I did my internship—supervised my sister’s research, which was informed by stories from our brother Quvi, our mother Rose, her mother Phoebe, our Uncle Jack, and our great-great-grandfather Happy Jack. Napoleon encouraged Rebecca to create a multifaceted final presentation, and as part of her final project, Rebecca created a print of the engraving. If this were a regular essay, I would not discuss any of these personal connections, and Napoleon would appear, at most, as a reference. My family may not have been mentioned at all. The point I’m making by illuminating these personal connections for you is that it is difficult for me to imagine the content of a story separately from the forms and paths by which it has been transmitted to us. This is what I was talking about when I said earlier that we in the West tend to separate stories from knowledge. I need to be able to tell the next generation not only the story of our family name, but also how I came to know it.

Apart from all this, the value of our stories and creative traditions is not only the knowledge they carry, or the work of previous generations to bring them to us, or even their craft and beauty. They are precious simply in themselves. Some of the protocols I learned about in my research will help to illuminate this point.

III. What Some Protocols Are Like

Protocols are diverse. They can be encoded rigidly or used in a more flexible and informal way. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission has given publishers in Canada a mandate to understand and implement Indigenous protocols. I found three resources particularly helpful in learning about protocols: Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm’s “‘We Think Differently. We Have a Different Understanding’: Editing Indigenous Texts as an Indigenous Editor” (2016); the Australia Council for the Arts’ *Writing: Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Writing* (2007); and Gregory Younging’s *Elements of Indigenous Style* (2018). All three define or describe protocols in terms of their underlying

ethical principles. For example, Akiwenzie-Damm explains that “Non-Hierarchical Relationships with Authors” is a practice based on the principles of “Dbadendizwin/Humility and Mnaadendiwin/Respect”; “Empowerment of Those Involved” is based on the principle of “Zaagidiwin/Love”; and “Linguistic Accuracy” is based on the principle of “Debwewin/Truth” (36–38).

The authors of *Protocols for Producing Indigenous Australian Writing* argue that “[t]he current legal framework does not promote or protect the rights of Indigenous people—particularly to own and control representation and dissemination of their stories, knowledge and other cultural expression” (Terri Janke qtd. in Australia 5). Indigenous storytelling protocols can function in part to protect the rights of Indigenous people and fill a gap that intellectual property law does not cover (Anderson and Younging 181). For example, the authors define “secret and sacred material” as “information or material that, under customary law, is: made available only to the initiated; used for a particular purpose; used at a particular time; information or material that can only be seen and heard by particular language group members (such as men or women or people with certain knowledge)” (Australia 21). The authors discuss some examples and note that “[i]t is the responsibility of those putting together writing projects to discuss any restrictions on use of the information with relevant Indigenous people and groups” (36). Understanding protocols in place elsewhere will not give us universal rules but may help us learn what questions to ask.

In “*Gnaritas Nullius* (No One’s Knowledge): The Essence of Traditional Knowledge and Its Colonization through Western Legal Regimes,” Younging illustrates the complexities of Indigenous traditional knowledge and draws attention to the ways in which Eurocentric copyright and intellectual property laws are inadequate for addressing Indigenous rights. He argues that Indigenous traditional knowledge is left vulnerable, and that “new systems of protection need to be developed and implemented (that could both include, and work in conjunction with, Indigenous customary law)” (163). In this context, a publisher’s responsibility to ensure proper attribution and acknowledgment of Indigenous stories goes well beyond publishing norms and the requirements of Canadian law.

For example, Hill told me about a T-shirt she once designed with a quote and image from a well known author. It was

based on a published book, publicly accessible to everybody. But we still went to the family, and said “Can I make a T-shirt about this? Can I draw a picture of [your relative] and put it on a T-shirt with a quote from his book and sell it?” It was to raise money for [Redwire Native Youth Media Society], so it wasn’t even for personal gain, but that’s what I’ve been raised to believe is the right way to go about doing something. (Hill)

Even though the quote she wanted to include in the T-shirt design was publicly available and would not be used for commercial profit, she knew it would not be right to make use of someone’s words and image without the approval of their family. This type of specialized insight that Indigenous people have from being raised with their cultural protocols speaks to the need for more Indigenous people to be involved with the production and publication of Indigenous stories at all levels.¹⁵

Understanding protocols requires judgment. For example, Hill says she was raised with “a sense of responsibility around not telling embarrassing stories or stories that people wouldn’t want to hear publicly” (Hill). This is not to say that potentially embarrassing stories must never be told; more so that they require permission, sensitivity, and judgment. Protocols are implemented on a case-by-case basis, in consultation with those who might be affected.

The principles and protocols outlined above speak to the responsibilities Indigenous storytellers feel toward their communities and relations. In English, the word “responsibility” can connote a sense of burden, but I don’t think that is how the storytellers who I know use it. My mother, Rose Taylor, writes her stories and poems in part to help people, and to provide understanding and hope. For her, being able to show compassion is a gift; you must be shown compassion if you are to be able to use it in your life and relationships (Rose Taylor). In the interviews I conducted and the authors I read during my research, I saw the concept of responsibility treated in a way that suggests it is also considered a gift. When I talked with Darren Préfontaine about Métis protocols and

his work at the Gabriel Dumont Institute (GDI) Press, he said, “It’s a real blessing for us to be involved in that process because you learn so much. . . . It’s just so enriching to work with so many talented people” (Préfontaine).

When describing the protocols followed at GDI Press, Préfontaine emphasized that one must begin by being “grounded in the community. . . . We make sure that anything we publish is agreed to by our authors or our elders, and that they have a chance to look through it and go through the whole process with us” (Préfontaine). Similarly, Métis control of Métis material is a priority with GDI’s online museum, where GDI makes sure every item is properly credited, and makes copies of materials (for example, photos of family members) available to the community. Decisions about licensing the use of cultural materials are always made by the community member(s) involved; they also have a say in how resources are marketed (Préfontaine).

My brother Quvi pointed out that if the publishing industry is disconnected from the people they are trying to invite and welcome, then once those people arrive “they have to do the work of educating” (Q. Taylor). He encourages publishers to spend “some time listening before getting writers involved.” Indigenous publishing projects should not be rushed. In my interview with Karen Clark, scholarly acquisitions editor at the University of Regina Press, she emphasized that setting aside as much time as necessary is particularly important “because you’re working within communities, not [just with] individuals. Where one person can quickly say ‘yes, no,’ when you’re working within communities, it takes longer” (Clark). Expectations from settlers in mainstream publishing are not always compatible with a world where “when it’s time, it’s time; and to take our time is part of our practice, and to gather community is part of our practice” (Clark). Préfontaine agrees; while it sometimes means more work, he says, “that’s part of how we do our business here” (Préfontaine). Similarly, Younging emphasizes “the essential role of relationship and trust” (“History” 44). He says, “You can’t just ‘get someone to sign off’ on Indigenous content from Traditional Knowledge and Oral Traditions” (44). It takes time to build trust and form meaningful relationships that are not tokenistic or one-sided.

There is a move in Indigenous writing, publishing, storytelling, and literary studies circles toward nation-specific approaches to Indigenous literatures (Fagan et al. 24), a move I understand as respecting the historical and cultural differences among and within Indigenous Peoples. For example, Préfontaine says: “I hate to use the word ‘Indigenous.’ We should be naming nations and people. That’s the other thing, that pan-word. Like ‘white,’ or ‘settler.’ They’re pan-words we use, but instead of Indigenous, we should say what the nēhiyawak are doing, what the Haudenosaunee are doing, what the Salish, what the Michif are doing” (Préfontaine). One reason why people might, as Préfontaine suggests, prefer nation-specific or People-specific understandings of literature is that pan-Indigenous assumptions create expectations for all Indigenous people to behave or think in the same ways. This does not serve Indigenous people’s diverse interests. One reason, from the world of publishing in particular, is that this expectation might lead to the misconception that any given Indigenous publishing professional is prepared to work on any given Indigenous story. Another reason is that, as Justice writes in *Why Indigenous Literatures Matter*, when an Indigenous person does not behave the way pan-Indigenous stereotypes dictate they should, this can be used to dismiss the person and their ideas by questioning their Indigeneity: “I’m suspicious of claims of universal values between all Indigenous peoples around the world, as such broad assertions too often gloss over real and meaningful distinctions between communities . . . These claims are all too easily weaponized in colonialist authenticity debates against Indigenous individuals and groups” (27–28). Editing presents a useful example. Just because an editor is Indigenous does not necessarily mean they can handle any manuscript by any other Indigenous person. Préfontaine stresses that it is not usually possible to have a First Nations editor do “cultural editing” (Préfontaine) of Métis manuscripts. Having a Cree editor, for example, work with a Métis manuscript “may or may not work, depending on how well they know the Métis stuff. Even if they’re familiar with some aspects of Métis culture that was originally Cree, it’s been Michifized; it’s become Métis” (Préfontaine). Doyon agrees, saying that at Theytus they always “make sure that the story represents the people. We don’t have Cree people writing about Mohawks. . . .

I know it's been done in the past. But truth and honesty in a story comes from a good place. That good place starts when people are respected that their cultures are different from other cultures." Likewise, pan-Indigenous expectations of writers are harmful when writers are only included in order to produce a token story. Quvi points out that when editors or publishers seek an Indigenous story in a tokenizing way, there is a risk the manuscript won't be treated with the same rigorous attention. He says as a writer it feels like a setup, and explains: "I don't like to be left with my ass hanging out. I don't want people to think that people only get jobs because they're Native but don't produce the same quality stuff, because we don't get the same [quality of editing]" (Q. Taylor).

Publishers should never treat Indigenous writing and representation as a pan-Indigenous box to check. This is not to say that our commonalities should or can be ignored. Reder writes,

I predict that the next generation of literary critics will return to pan-Indian approaches in the discussion of literature, not because they wish to return to a monolithic, homogenous notion of "Indian" but because such approaches hold within them possibilities to theorize aspects of common experience and common aesthetics, especially given the growing presence of urban Native populations with little connection to home communities, languages or cultures. (Fagan et al. 36)

Emerging publishing professionals should avoid tokenizing Indigenous people and making pan-Indigenous assumptions, while keeping in mind that each author does not "fit perfectly into a national tradition" (Fagan et al. 33) and that each person's relationship to their culture is different.

Despite the colonial experience in Canada, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit writers have always passed down stories and created new ones through a great variety of mediums, whether they were published or not. These stories have important functions in Indigenous cultures and knowledge systems. But as Younging illustrates, Western laws are inadequate to recognize these knowledge systems, instead leaving them vulnerable; so Indigenous protocols based on ethical principles are needed.

The protocols are not a rote list of rules to follow, but require judgment. Indigenous voices have been and continue to be ignored, suppressed, misrepresented, whitewashed, or stolen by settler publishers who don't understand the protocols. These acts of "destructive editing" (Shield) persist. Today, all progress is thanks to the work of previous Indigenous generations and their work to pass on and protect Indigenous stories and storytelling practices. Indigenous publishing is in a period of resurgence characterized by projects with Indigenous-led goals and agendas.

IV. Indigenous Publishing Agendas¹⁶

We are not writing back, we are writing our way home.

Lee Maracle¹⁷

When I asked Quvi what he would like to see happen with my project, he answered that we need to shift our definition of success:

I think the idea of publishing has to shift. If success is still the monetary model . . . that model was built to sell a product, and I just don't think our work is a product. . . . Maybe only a hundred people need a story, and to make it available so that those hundred people can have it is important, and it's not a Sophie Kinsella book that's meant to be sold by the millions. Because I don't think a million people are able to absorb or learn from the lessons in some of these stories. I think sometimes only 100 people or 10. So finding a way to change what publishing is . . . so that success isn't measured by how many people you reach, but whether you reach the right people.

This insight helped me articulate that Indigenous "inclusion" in Canadian publishing is not the ultimate concern of this essay. I hope the background I have drafted gives useful context for where we are today, but I do not want it to be taken as a call to settler publishers to swoop in as heroes. Nor do I want to paralyze emerging publishers with fear of doing the wrong thing. Instead, I want to stress the importance of *centring* Indigenous people and supporting the work they are already doing (Younging, *Elements* 3) and of *centring* Indigenous perspectives, needs, and goals in our work.

Award-winning Interior Salish author, storyteller, and mother Nicola I. Campbell argues: “[T]he continual retelling of stories that depict the most shattered, colonized and fragmented version of ourselves as Indigenous people without showing our transformational opposite—our best selves: our healing, joy, and achievements, and especially our journey to transformation—is a form of narrative violence that validates erroneous and incomplete truths.” In discussions that I was lucky to be part of at the Indigenous Editors Circle / Editing Indigenous Manuscripts course at Humber College in 2017, Campbell and other Indigenous authors and editors including Jenny Kay Dupuis and Cherie Dimaline repeatedly emphasized authors’ and storytellers’ responsibilities to youth. This doesn’t mean that authors simply shy away from difficult topics; in fact, part of the reason they write is “to make sure that the young people know what really happened” (Mayureak Ashoona qtd. in Feheley 14). During a panel session titled “Best Practices in Indigenous Publishing,” Younging explained his use of the terms “extraction” and “reclamation” with respect to Indigenous literature. Since the beginning of Aboriginal literature, he said, the majority of its history has been about extraction. I think he was referring to the extraction of stories from the people, of resources from the land, and of children from their families and communities. I also take this to mean both that Indigenous people and communities were mined for the stories that settlers wanted; and that those stories were themselves often about the trauma of extraction. Younging said that people are now turning toward “reclamation” (“Best”), which I understand as Indigenous Peoples taking back what’s been taken, and making it belong to us again on our own terms.

Notes

- 1 An earlier version of this essay, my final report in the Master of Publishing Program at Simon Fraser University, is available at summit.sfu.ca/item/19304.
- 2 Also spelled Gitksan.
- 3 native-land.ca and the accompanying blog are recommended resources.
- 4 I had the honour of working with Dr. White’s daughter, Vicki White, to co-edit the second edition of Dr. White’s book *Legends and Teachings of Xeel’s, the Creator*. To match the family’s preference on that publication, I have maintained the honorific “Dr.” throughout the essay. For consistency, and out of respect, I have

- used honorifics for a wide variety of scholars and knowledge holders throughout this article because in my experience, some Indigenous people's credentials, as well as women's credentials, are subtly or overtly delegitimized in settler colonial societies.
- 5 Dr. Archibald is herself a celebrated Stó:lō scholar known for her contributions to Indigenous "storywork," most notably in *Indigenous Storywork*.
- 6 Fee attributes this concept to Kalant.
- 7 Fee attributes the term "Millennium Scoop" to an article titled "First Nations Children Still Taken from Parents."
- 8 See, for example, Lutz's "The Beginnings of Contemporary Aboriginal Literature."
- 9 This course was one of two streams at the 2017 Indigenous Editors Circle. For more information please visit www.indigenouseitorsassociation.ca.
- 10 A "starlight ride" or "starlight tour" occurs when police or RCMP apprehend a person, in most cases an Indigenous person, drive them out of town, and leave them there. At least three deaths are suspected to have occurred as a result of starlight tours (Meagan Campbell).
- 11 This is from Cariou's statements in the opening session of the Indigenous Editors Circle/Editing Indigenous Manuscripts combined course, in which Cariou was a faculty member, at Humber College in Etobicoke, Ontario, in August 2017.
- 12 See Australia 12.
- 13 The collaborative article in which Dr. Martin's piece appears was later reprinted in *Cultural Grammars of Nation, Diaspora, and Indigeneity in Canada*, edited by Christine Kim, Sophie McCall, and Melina Baum Singer.
- 14 Archibald's phrase "storywork" is usually written as one word.
- 15 For further discussion of concerns Indigenous writers might have with non-Indigenous editors, see Australia 19.
- 16 I was inspired to think in terms of Indigenous publishing "agendas" by the work of Smith, a Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou educator and author of the classic text *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, one chapter of which is concerned with "[a]rticulating an Indigenous [r]esearch [a]genda." Many of her discussions of Indigenous research are applicable to me and my emerging publishing colleagues when we view ourselves as learners, or researchers, in the field of Indigenous publishing.
- 17 Lee Maracle cited in Lutz, "Aboriginal Literature," 89.

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