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Ethics Statement

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed with the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

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Abstract

This research examines the relationship between the local publishing industry in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories and the Dëne Sųłíné (Chipewyan) community and looks at how this established relationship can guide other publishers as they consult with communities and seek to understand local protocols.

The perspectives of Dëne Sųłíné and non-Indigenous people in publishing were organized to identify the core elements and ideas of a successful working relationship built on continued consultation, trust, and understanding.

Keywords: Dëne Sųłíné; consultation; Protocols; Traditional Knowledge; publishing
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Necessity

Pre-contact, Indigenous Peoples living across what we now call Canada had long established community Protocols that governed how knowledge was distributed and protected. Today, the ways in which Traditional Knowledge (TK) or Traditional Cultural Expressions (TCEs) are owned and shared by Indigenous communities is complex and situated in community ownership, orality, and knowledge transfer through generations in accordance with these Protocols (Coombe 2008, 258, Udy 2015).

Over hundreds of years of colonialism, European ideas of copyright and public domain were forcibly planted across much of the world, while at the same time Indigenous ideas of community ownership and knowledge sharing were suppressed. Only in recent decades have steps been taken to place value in Indigenous ways of knowing, but in the meantime hundreds of years of appropriation, misinformation, and bias have become deeply woven into the fabric of Canadian culture.

Non-Indigenous publishers in particular have a history of publishing one-sided, stereotypical accounts of Indigenous life, and their gross errors and culturally insensitive decisions have lasting negative effects. The colonial legacy has left TK without legal protection and cultural Protocols are not accepted and understood by outsiders, and so publishers must take steps to begin to decolonize internalized ideas of ownership of knowledge and public domain. It is of the utmost importance to examine, through a publishing lens, how to reinstate a culture of respect around community Protocols, particularly when it comes to working with sensitive and sacred material.

I have been living and working in a predominantly Indigenous community – Fort Smith, Northwest Territories – for nearly the past four years. Part of my job was to help coordinate the production of Indigenous language resources and books. But not only did I not know anything about publishing, as a non-Indigenous person new to the community I had no idea what Protocols I should have been following.

My goal in writing this report was to produce the guide that I needed when I was first starting out. I'll begin by exploring established and emerging research on how Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and TK interact in Canada and across the world, and examine what solutions have been proposed thus far (Younging 2018, Christen 2015, Gebru 2015, Udy 2015, Coombe 2012, Assembly of First Nations 2010, Everett 2009, Gwich’in Social and Cultural Institute 2011, Brascoupé and Mann 2001, Janke 1998). It is important to understand what is broken in order to fix it.

I will build on this research through collaborating with the two Dene Súłìné First Nations in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories: Salt River First Nation and Smith’s Landing First Nation. This study will look at how publishers can build a relationship with the community and properly consult on
projects to ensure they are following the community’s Protocols when publishing stories by or about the Indigenous people who live there, with a specific emphasis placed on how to manage the dissemination of Traditional Knowledge in a culturally appropriate way. I had originally intended to draft a publishing Protocol specific to this community, but over the course of my interviews I realized each project is so unique that consultations and Protocols can vary wildly depending on the subject matter and, therefore, must be done on a case-by-case basis.

It is my hope this report will act as both an educational framework for communities looking to develop and share their own publishing Protocols, and a learning tool for Canadian publishers committed to not just indigenizing publishing, but decolonizing publishing.

Perhaps most importantly, the framework will illustrate how values and expectations can change depending on the situation and the community, and how Indigenous culture is alive and evolving (Younging 2018, Burri 2010).

1.2 Situating the Research
It is important to briefly review the relationship between both Intellectual Property Law and Traditional Knowledge in Canada in order to situate my research and explore where consultation comes in and why it is so important.

There is a fundamental difference in worldviews that divides Indigenous Traditional Knowledge (TK) and Western Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in Canada. In publishing, these differing views have brought up complex questions – such as “How should we view ownership?” and “What is public domain?” – that writers, editors, and publishers must navigate without established research-based models to guide them (Younging 2018).

As publishers, we need to rely on and respect Protocols because copyright law (one of the branches of IPR) remains a thoroughly Western construct, having not yet been revised in this supposed truth and reconciliation era. The slow pace of change for legislated protections has proven frustrating for Indigenous Peoples, who have watched time after time their culture be appropriated, their stories stolen, and their knowledge misused (Younging 2018, Christen 2015, Coombe 2015, Gebru 2015).

Research out of Australia by Indigenous lawyer Terri Janke, along with the multi-disciplinary Intellectual Property Issues in Cultural Heritage project out of Simon Fraser University, has laid the groundwork for understanding how IPR and TK can coexist through Protocols, but there is still much work to be done to develop how these Protocols will function in a Canadian publishing context (Coombe 2008, IPinCH 2016, Janke 1998, Younging 2018) and what consultation in an artistic field should look like. In my literature review chapter I expand on how Janke, Younging, and others have described consultation.

In addition, TK in publishing understudied in comparison to research done in larger focus areas such as bioethics or land sovereignty. Publishers want to properly consult and follow Protocols – and they know “neglect or failure to acknowledge or take such protocols seriously can be
read as a lack of commitment to both the process and the outcome” (Smith 1999) – but have few examples of what this work looks like.

1.3 Indigenous Style Guides

I had no trouble finding information calling for Canada to do a better job of protecting, respecting, and acknowledging the rights and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples, but other than Gregory Younging’s *Elements of Indigenous Style*, which came out in 2018, there are few guiding resources available specific to Canada (although much work has been done in Australia (Christen 2015, Janke 1998). In his preface, Younging, who is a member of Opsakwayak Cree Nation in Northern Manitoba, writes, “This book is, indeed, a first attempt at an Indigenous style guide ... I fully intend that other Indigenous and non-Indigenous publishers and editors, and other interested parties, will consider these proposed principles and guidelines, and provide feedback that will inform subsequent editions” (2018).

*Elements of Indigenous Style* follows a 2014 Cultural Protocols and Arts Forum in Penticton, BC, where the First Peoples’ Cultural Council and participants identified “a need for creation of cultural protocols and the arts handbook and/or reference guides” (2014), and Canada accepting the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2016 which says Indigenous Peoples “have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over such cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and traditional cultural expressions” (2008).

Building on Younging’s work and the work of others, my research is an extension of the guidelines already produced for publishers. Using the Dëne Sųłiné community in Fort Smith as a case study, it outlines how to approach a community and find out what the consultation process and working relationship should look like in order for autonomy over culture and knowledge to rest fully with the Indigenous People throughout the project. The ideas embedded in this paper can be seen as an additional resource for publishers and model for Indigenous communities who want to vocalize their own expectations for consultation as they relate to publishing.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Indigenous Inclusion in Canadian Publishing

Throughout my time at Simon Fraser University studying publishing, time after time we discussed how publishing has long been a field where gatekeepers in positions of power make decisions about who is allowed to have a voice, which stories are shared, and how they are told (Emerging Leaders in Publishing Summit 2018).

Unsurprisingly, these gatekeepers have been a homogenous group: mainly connected to colonial institutions. Just as they have experienced privilege so have their stories; as a result, this has led to the erasure or misrepresentation of entire cultures and peoples (Younging 2018).

In *Elements of Indigenous Style*, Younging begins by stating why an Indigenous style guide is needed: “[The] paramount purpose of literature ... should be to present culture in a realistic and insightful manner, with the highest degree of verisimilitude” (2018). He explains that colonial practice has dictated information about Indigenous Peoples be transmitted non-Indigenous people, rather than Indigenous Peoples transmitting their own perspectives and stories.

Because of sustained, systemic oppression of Indigenous voices, Younging argues it is especially important these voices be given proper platforms. “In some respects, this is especially pressing for Indigenous People in Canada ... because they have been misrepresented for so long, which has created a body of literature inconsistent with, and often opposed to, Indigenous cultural understandings” (2018).

Wendy Whitebear, a Cree-Saulteaux from White Bear First Nation, who works for the University of Regina Press, adds, “Our history and our stories are continually being told from a colonial perspective and therefore lack the magnitude of atrocities that happened and the resilience of our people ... Indigenous ways of knowing and being should inform the work of publishing” (Younging 2018).

At the same time, we must be careful publishing does not just become another knowledge-gathering activity. The Assembly of First Nations cautions this, explaining “knowledge-gathering activities” are just colonization and exploitation in a different form, something for people in positions of power to benefit from and use against Indigenous Peoples (year unknown).

While I could write an entire thesis on the harmful effects this practice has had and how it has left Indigenous Peoples with a deeply rooted and understandable mistrust of research and publishing (Smith 1999, Assembly of First Nations), in this paper I focus on the solutions as Younging did. He explains “cultural appropriation, misrepresentation, and lack of respect for Indigenous cultural Protocols [are] significant problems in Canadian publishing,” but goes on to say the solutions include training more Indigenous people in the field, better training for non-Indigenous people, and recognizing the work being done and learning from it, understanding these must be viewed through unique community lenses and are not cookie-cutter methodologies (2018).
While Indigenous authors, editors, and illustrators remain in the minority, there has been a push for inclusion in recent years led by both Indigenous publishers as well as Canadian publishing houses large and small. But again, we must be cautious this increased appetite for Indigenous stories (Porter 2018) is not accompanied by exploitative growth.

I hope publishing houses are responding to the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action and attempting to balance hundreds of years of white-washed publications with new publications featuring diverse voices and experiences, but, at the same time, I recognize publishers have realized they can make money from these stories. I would argue the publication of Indigenous voices cannot be entirely altruistic when money is a motivator and, as such, it is important we are not just publishing Indigenous stories but are consulting with Indigenous Peoples at every stage of the process.

### 2.2. Traditional Knowledge Exploitation

While publishers are becoming more and more aware of ethical behaviour around Indigenous cultures, I worry that – due to how consultation is portrayed in the mainstream media – people see consultation as something that only applies to land and not to knowledge, and that the results of the consultation are optional.

In some cases, media scorn and societal pressure cause companies and individuals to rethink potentially offensive works. For example, Book*hug pulled *Who Took My Sister?* when there was a backlash because neither they nor the author had consulted with one of the families whose murdered loved one was featured in the book (McKenzie-Sutter 2018). Without proper protections, which will be discussed in the coming sections, risk remains that Indigenous stories and collective knowledge of the world – Traditional Knowledge – remain at risk of appropriation. With greater awareness of Indigenous culture will come greater potential for commercialization and appropriation.

As lawyer Vanessa Udy points out, “Differing circumstances (including knowledge, wealth, power and ability) render some people better able than others to exploit legal rights … There has been a marked absence of significant enforcement actions by Canadian Aboriginal groups largely due to the cost of registration and/or enforcement of intellectual property rights” (Udy 2015). Small communities already stretched for resources are unable to fight big corporations in court, especially when Canadian law is not on their side. If it is cheaper to exploit TK and later settle with the Indigenous Peoples affected, then this is likely what corporations will do, as “many areas of Traditional Knowledge have potentially lucrative applications” (Simeone 2004).

### 2.3. Intellectual Property Rights

As I referenced in my introduction, it’s important to briefly review where Canada’s current intellectual property systems fit in (or, more accurately, where they do not) when working with Indigenous knowledge and texts. We have to understand the problems with our current system so we are cognisant of gaps when trying to protect Indigenous TK.
In Indigenous culture, knowledge can be owned by a family or community and is handed down through generations. There is often no one identifiable owner, no originator of a unique idea, no tangible expression of the information, nor expectation that after a certain amount of time has passed the knowledge will be available to everyone to access and profit from. On the opposing side, European constructs focus heavily on authors’ rights (which by law extend a certain number of years after their death, following which their work enters the public domain), tangible expressions of creativity, and the creator developing unique, marketable work. Given the fundamental differences, it becomes very difficult to find a solution that suits and honours both cultures, yet “new systems of protection need to be developed and implemented that could both include, and work in conjunction with, Indigenous customary law” (Younging 2018).

Younging notes, “Neither common law nor international treaties place Indigenous customary law on equal footing with other sources of law. As a result, Traditional Knowledge (TK) is particularly vulnerable to continued misuse and appropriation without substantive legal protection” (2018). Although European regulatory regimes are hundreds of years younger than Indigenous regimes, historical realities have subjugated Indigenous knowledge beneath European constructs (Younging 2018). As such, Indigenous Peoples have had to either find ways to force Traditional Knowledge to adapt to Intellectual Property Rights, or have developed Protocols that govern the use of TK as Younging later suggests.

My original plan for this paper was to focus on the specific Protocols that govern knowledge related to publishing as an alternative to IPR. I envisioned a document that others working within my community could use to ensure they were following the necessary Protocols, and that other communities could use to develop their own list of protocols. But as my research progressed, I realized the focus needed to be on consultation and that the necessary Protocols would flow from those discussions. It’s not that publishers don’t want to follow Protocols – it’s that they don’t know how to find out what these Protocols are, because they are only familiar with written laws and timelines they know how to access and understand. What publishers need is a framework that looks at consultation through a publishing lens and shows how they can do work in Indigenous communities respectfully and properly.

2.4. Cultural Protocols
It remains important to define and discuss Protocols for non-Indigenous publishers. It is critical Protocols are followed. As Anderson explains:

> A protocol is a code of conduct, a guideline, or a set of manners that explains how people should behave in certain circumstances. Protocols make new kinds of negotiation possible. They can be used to set community standards around knowledge circulation and use for outsiders as well as help change attitudes and set new standards. Generally, protocols are flexible and can change over time. It is important to see them as a tool to help achieve certain goals that other areas of law have been unable to achieve. As formal or informal guidelines for behaviour, protocols can help build relationships and make new ones possible.” (2015)
For example, Protocols may govern when seasonal stories are shared, who is allowed to tell a story, and who is allowed to hear a story.

Although Protocols can increase awareness of appropriate and responsible behaviour at the community level, in the legal system they are simply guidelines and therefore susceptible to vulnerabilities. In many cases, as Younging explains, “They are not made up counter to legal experience but are informed by and respond to formal legal failings or inadequacies” (2018). They fill a loophole the law has yet to recognize as a problem, or have existed long before the current law did. And so Protocols, and similar private law-making forms, like agreements, consents, and contracts, rely on people’s ability to self-govern (Younging 2018).

Some Indigenous communities have had success in implementing community Protocols everyone interacting with the community must follow, formulating a new idea of ownership: Indigenous cultural property (Younging 2018, Gwich’in Social and Cultural Institute 2011). While Brian Fitzgerald and Susan Hedge argue cultural protocols are “becoming an increasingly important means of ensuring that the rights of indigenous peoples are recognized”(2009), it is not enough that rights are recognized and acknowledged – they must be respected and followed.

One interesting solution to give Protocols more clout was proposed by Anderson and her colleagues: a “Traditional Knowledge Licenses and Labels initiative,” which works similarly to a Creative Commons licence (Anderson 2015, Christen 2015). But this solution also relies on the public’s responsibility to govern themselves. From what I have learned while working on this paper, I would argue time is better spent building relationships and consulting with Indigenous communities than putting the onus on the communities themselves to assign licences and labels for specific contexts and situations. As Anderson herself admits, labels and licences “function as an educative strategy,” rather than as a protective measure for Indigenous works.

When it comes to the transfer of information within Indigenous knowledge systems, we cannot simply archive, preserve, and circulate (Burri 2010). We cannot only facilitate a way for the information to be shared appropriately, we must also ensure this new way of transferring knowledge does not negatively impact the communities it is meant to help. As Michael F Brown notes, “If global cultural diversity is preserved on digital recording devices while the people who gave rise to this artistry and knowledge have disappeared, then efforts to preserve intangible property will be judged a failure” (Brown 2005). As publishers, we must be cognisant that we do not see our work as an act of preservation, but rather as an act of revitalization. Our work should respect that culture is alive and constantly changing, and should support that rather than snapshot it.

Work done by Younging, Janke, and the Indigenous Editors Circle to draft general principles for working with Indigenous writing provides a solid starting point (Younging 2018, Janke 2016), but the importance of additional community-based consultation cannot be stressed enough. “While the development of an international approach to Indigenous intellectual property issues is important, there is also an urgent need to develop local strategies that are appropriate to both community and context and are more immediately accessible,” writes Anderson (2015). Thus,
this report explores what a local strategy looks like and how we can continue to build on work that has already been done.

2.5. Consultation
Key to consultation is the idea of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC). In 2007, when the UN General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, they said FPIC was “a pre-requisite for any activity that affects [Indigenous Peoples’] ancestral lands, territories and natural resources” (FOA 2016). While Traditional Knowledge and Indigenous stories are not specifically mentioned, as they are so closely tied to land and territory it should go without saying these consultation requirements should also apply to the intangible elements of culture.

“It is recommended that organizations seeking FPIC contribute to progressively enable peoples to exercise their right to self-determination,” says the Free, Prior and Informed Consent Manual, before going on to explain FPIC is a process, not an end result (2016). That process must allow for independent and collective discussions and decision-making, in a safe environment, allowing as much time as needed, and in a culturally appropriate way. Consent is not necessarily the end result – the result is whichever outcome occurs – and if consent is given it can be withdrawn at any time. In publishing, this may mean a story is not told or a book is pulled from sales and distribution, like Book*hug did with Where is Your Sister?.

Let’s review what the UN means by “free,” “prior,” and “informed.”

“Free refers to a consent given voluntarily and without coercion, intimidation or manipulation. It also refers to a process that is self-directed by the community from whom consent is being sought, unencumbered by coercion, expectations or timelines that are externally imposed” (FOA 2016).

External timelines are where publishers are most likely to stumble. Used to working on timelines governed by grant deadlines and invoices at every stage of the process, giving partners the necessary time to make important decisions about projects may require new ways of planning projects to satisfy all parties.

“Prior means that consent is sought sufficiently in advance of any authorization or commencement of activities, at the early stages of a development or investment plan, and not only when the need arises to obtain approval from the community” (FOA 2016).

Indigenous partners need to be involved from the very start of each project and this involvement needs to continue through until the very end of each project.

“Informed refers mainly to the nature of the engagement and type of information that should be provided prior to seeking consent and also as part of the ongoing consent process” (FOA 2016).
Publishers need to share objective, accessible, and complete information throughout the project.

In *Elements of Indigenous Style*, Younging lists 22 principles of Indigenous style. While consultation is not often mentioned explicitly, it is clear these principles are an integral part of the publishing process when working with Indigenous authors or content. In exploring the sixth principle, collaboration, he says, “Indigenous publishing often involves consulting and acknowledging many people.” The wider the circle of consultation and knowledge, the less likely you are to break Protocol or offend anyone.

Janke, who has developed similar principles for the Australia Council for the Arts, also identifies consultation as key. She suggests identifying the appropriate people to talk to, taking good notes, keeping the people you are consulting with informed of your progress (which includes sending them drafts), and being flexible when it comes to the time a project may take (2007) under her section on the consultation process.

And Smith, whose book *Decolonizing Methodologies* predates even UNDRIP, stresses Indigenous Peoples’ needs to be active participants throughout the consultation process. “In many projects the process is far more important than the outcome,” she writes. “Processes are expected to be respectful, to enable people, to heal and to educate...The processes of consultation, collective meetings, open debate and shared decision making are crucial aspects of tribal research practices” (1999).

Smith explains consent is given to a person based on their credibility and trustworthiness – not based on the content of their proposal.
Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction
The purpose of this study was to explore, at a grassroots level, what Indigenous communities need from publishers when publishers are working with Indigenous stories, particularly given the lack of overarching guidelines or policies that take into consideration how Indigenous knowledge and stories are transferred.

Indigenous perceptions of publishing in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories are the main focus of this study. The parallel perceptions of non-Indigenous people are a secondary focus in the qualitative interviews. I believed it was important to reflect the teachings and learnings of both, as both will continue to play a role in publishing in the territory.

I interviewed Indigenous Elders and non-Indigenous people who have worked to publish stories in Fort Smith. While I proposed a set of questions (as was required by Simon Fraser University's Research Ethics Board), I knew going into my research they would act as a framework for the discussion as opposed to a required list. Recognizing each person brings with them a different story and different experiences, these qualitative interviews were conducted as casual conversations. I began by describing my research, explaining the problems that arise with intellectual property law and Indigenous knowledge, and clarifying how I was exploring the use of the Protocols – and how the community would like the consultation process to happen – as an alternative means of protection. I then invited participants to begin the discussion by sharing their thoughts and experiences on publishing in the north, where they thought improvements could be made, and what younger generations must be cognisant of when undertaking similar work. I asked questions for clarification and expansion of answers where necessary, or referred back to the predetermined set when I needed to guide the interview back toward the topic.

I also spoke with non-Indigenous people who have worked in publishing in Fort Smith, often behind the scenes in a project management capacity. Other non-Indigenous publishers can learn from the ways in which they have built relationships and properly consulted in the community. These research participants have also made mistakes. Acknowledging their lessons learned can help ensure the same mistakes are not repeated in this region or across Canada.

3.2. Community
Fort Smith, Northwest Territories – a town I have called home for the past four years – has a population of 2,500 people and is two-and-a-half hours away from the nearest neighbouring town. Though small, the town is diverse. Métis, Dëne Sųłiné (Chipewyan), Nēhiyawēwin (Cree), and non-Indigenous people make up the small population.

The South Slave Divisional Education Council (SSDEC), where I work as Public Affairs Coordinator, services five communities across the South Slave region but is based in Fort Smith. The schools in Fort Smith offer second-language instruction in Core French, Dëne Sųliné, and Nēhiyawēwin, and similarly, the SSDEC publishes Indigenous-language books in
Dëne Sųłíné and Nêhiyawēwin for use in classrooms. The SSDEC has published more than 300 books to date.

The SSDEC has won numerous territorial and national awards for its success in increasing student achievement through a direct and sustained research-based Leadership for Literacy initiative. The council is also renowned for its work supporting and rejuvenating Indigenous languages through the development of Indigenous language books, games, classroom resources, and on-the-land culture camps.

While I had originally intended to survey a variety of community members about publishing and protocols, when I spoke with employees at Smith’s Landing First Nation about my research, I realized concepts like intellectual property rights – and how they are incompatible with Traditional Knowledge – can be difficult to explain. After that initial meeting, I decided it would be more beneficial to focus on in-depth interviews with people who already have a relationship with the industry and topics at hand, even if it meant a smaller pool of participants.

3.3. Participants
Participants involved in the qualitative interviews varied in age, experience, and ethnicity, but all shared the experience of working in book publishing in Fort Smith. The study skewed toward interviews with Elders and non-Indigenous people with extensive experience working in collaboration with Indigenous Peoples in the Northwest Territories.

As this study looked at the publication of Dëne Sųłíné-language books, members of the Salt River First Nation and Smith’s Landing First Nation, which are based in or just outside of Fort Smith, were invited to participate. For the most part, these participants were educators who have taught their language in the classrooms and are supportive of the development of tangible resources to aid in language revival. At the time I was planning and beginning my research, the Northwest Territory Métis Nation’s mandate was to promote the Cree language. I decided not to include them as the different languages are connected to entirely unique cultures, which would have both broadened the scope of this project and put it at risk of making generalizations that Indigenous cultures are so similar independent consultations are not necessary. (As I was completing my research I learned their mandate had expanded to include Dëne Sųłíné when they approached to the South Slave Divisional Education Council to place a large order of Dëne Sųłíné books.)

Non-Indigenous people invited to participate included educators who have spent most of their teaching career in the Northwest Territories and, more specifically, have taken up revitalization of Indigenous languages as a critical cause.

The ways in which these participants have been involved in the publishing processes is wide-ranging. Some have written books, some have provided ideas for books, some have translated books, some teach using the books, and some have worked on the back-end production of the books – and all of these experiences are necessary to understanding how we can continue to publish with fidelity.
3.4. Methods
I found an unsurprising lack of research regarding publishing, Protocols, and Indigenous communities while completing the literature review for this paper. While there are important resources that look at how research itself is to be conducted in Indigenous communities, this is often geared toward academics in the hard sciences.

As I was conducting research in a primarily Indigenous community and about publishing in an Indigenous context, I read Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies* before I began interviews. As Smith describes, research in Indigenous communities should be looked at through an Indigenous perspective as opposed to what academia would consider “traditional research” (1999). It should be based around the community’s needs and how knowledge flows through the community. Rather fitting research in an Indigenous community into the traditional academic model, researchers need to allow the research to flow and happen in alternative models. They need to allow the community the time they need, rather than following external timelines. And as I discuss in the final chapter, these lessons also apply to publishers.

As such, I determined my conversations would be guided by respect, politeness, and love in line with the guiding principles according to the Dene Suline of this area: the Dene Laws. The Dene Laws were given to the Dene by a man named Yamörá, who, as legend goes, “journeyed throughout the territory in order to help the people. Yamörá destroyed the giant animals and separated people from animals, establishing a relationship based on mutual respect and understanding” (Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre 2015). Yamörá gave the people of Denedeh the laws so they could live in harmony with the animals, the land, and each other.

To this day, Dene communities are guided by the Dene Laws, of which there are usually nine:
- Share what you have
- Help each other
- Sleep at night and work in the day
- Be polite, do not argue with others
- Young girls and boys should behave respectfully
- Love each other as much as possible
- Be as happy as possible at all times
- Pass on the teachings
- Be respectful of Elders and everything around you

With these laws in mind as a type of methodology, I entered discussions with an awareness of how little I know and how much I had to learn. Having conversations as equals, and not as a researcher looking to extract information from a community for my own benefit, was of the utmost importance.

Smith talks about the importance of ownership and having communities writing their own stories and versions for their own purposes, and so key to this design was allowing and encouraging research participants to shape the direction of the research. “Storytelling is a useful and culturally appropriate way of representing ‘diversities of truth’ within which the storyteller rather
than the researcher retains control," she writes, quoting Russell Bishop’s idea that stories are tools (Smith 1999). The questions I asked were far less important than the stories and knowledge participants chose to share. In order for the process to be a partnership, I needed to format our conversations as just that, rather than as formal interviews.

I collected my data using a qualitative narrative interview format. In a melding of both Indigenous and Western research methodology, I listened carefully to research participants and engaged in conversation where appropriate, but also audiotaped and transcribed verbatim the interviews to ensure fidelity was preserved. Participants were invited to be active participants throughout the process, from consultation to collective meetings to shared decision making (Smith 1999).

Projects are for the community and need to be something the community wants and will benefit from (Smith 1999). It was also important to clearly explain my project as the term “research” connotes colonialism in many Indigenous communities whose knowledge has been inappropriately extracted, and it was my responsibility to show how I was working to ensure this didn’t happen through my own research.

3.5. Issues of Trustworthiness

While all precautions were taken to safeguard participants’ identifying information, Fort Smith is a small community with an even smaller number of people involved in publishing and language revitalization efforts. As such, complete anonymity cannot be entirely guaranteed. Additionally, as participants in this research came with varying backgrounds related to publishing (as authors, as publishers, as translators, and as editors) and with varying relationships to me, this could lead to questions about the validity of the findings and spark ethical considerations.

The Western approach to research asserts that, in order to be unbiased, I should have been distanced from the community in which I was conducting research, so as not to develop personal biases or connections that would interfere with my ability to be neutral and objective – things we have been taught to perceive as qualities of superior research (Smith 1999).

As a non-Indigenous researcher living and working in a predominantly Indigenous community, I interviewed people with whom I had already developed relationships. I see this as beneficial to my research as the years I have spent working in the community lead to richer conversations. Yet there was also more onus on me to protect, interpret, and share this data with both fidelity and neutrality.

But an Indigenous research methodology approach means participation of the community is maximized and more emphasis is placed on relationships. The research is transformed: “Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, and people participate on different terms” (Smith 1999). What some may see as an issue is just a different way of conducting research, one that leads to richer, sincerer, and connected responses.
Chapter 4: Results

4.1. Introduction

When I was working on my application for the Simon Fraser University Research Ethics Board, I was required to submit my proposed research questions. Months away from being back in Fort Smith and collaborating with the community to determine what they wanted the end result of my research to look like, I submitted these questions with the understanding that they may or may not guide my research. From conception, these questions have been and remain skeletal.

As I began my interviews, asking a diverse group of people with far more experience than I a set list of questions felt too impersonal and rigid. Most of the people I spoke with had 40 years of experience living and working in small northern communities. They had success in their careers and transitioned into publishing because they had built relationships with their communities. People trusted these community authors, translators, and publishers and allowed them to share their stories and their languages.

The interviews are not organized chronologically, but rather by participant expertise on the research topic. Interviews with Indigenous Elders come first, followed by an interview with First Nations employees, and finally, interviews with non-Indigenous participants.

I realized my questions would be limiting because they would set boundaries on people’s experiences and what they deemed most important. Just as this research is meant to be a framework, so are the questions. I used them to guide the conversation back to publishing if needed, but allowing flexibility and freedom for the conversation to flow naturally was more enlightening.

Furthermore, as a settler living and working in an Indigenous community, I had to be cognisant of how researchers and publishers have historically both taken from Indigenous communities without consent and misrepresented Indigenous Peoples and stories. It was of the utmost importance the stories and knowledge shared with me were represented accurately, fairly, and fully.

This approach to research has been documented by scholars including Simpkins, Davis and Smith, who advocate part of decolonizing research is being flexible to changing plans (Davis 2004, Simpkins 2010, Smith 1999).

Simpkins, who wrote a paper entitled “Listening Between the Lines: Reflections on Listening, Interpreting and Collaborating with Aboriginal Communities in Canada,” explains she sees the interview as a guided conversation in which she asked the research participants to share what was relevant to them: “This sometimes required that I simply go with the stories and responses of the interviewees and trust that the value and relevance to the research question will emerge as the context of the interviewee becomes more apparent. This not only tests the researchers’ commitment to the qualitative process, but also has the possibility of transforming/informing the research process” (2010).
Below are the questions I submitted to the Research Ethics Board:

- How does your community share Traditional Knowledge? How do you know what can/cannot be shared?
- How does your community protect Traditional Knowledge?
- How does your community balance the protection of Traditional Knowledge with public good/moral obligation?
- How does your community respond when people break Protocol?
- What steps are required in developing community Protocol that can be shared with non-Indigenous publishers?
- How can we make Protocols accessible to both the Indigenous community and to non-Indigenous publishers?
- What questions should non-Indigenous publishers ask themselves when considering publishing work that originated from your community?
- What do you want a publishing Protocol to accomplish?
- Do you think a Protocol is enough, or do we need to take stronger measures to protect Traditional Knowledge?

During the interviews, these questions were only referenced to guide the conversation back to my research topic when necessary.

4.2. Participant #1 - Elder, Retired Educator, Translator

Sitting at her kitchen table as she butchered a bison her husband had harvested, I spoke with an Elder, Dëne Sųłıné translator, and retired educator for an hour and a half about education, sharing legends, syllabics and Dëne Roman Orthography, and of course, what ties everything together: stories.

“We had hardly any resources here, we had hardly any books when we started, so we developed a five-year plan of what we'd like to see,” she said, talking about how all of the language instructors in the South Slave came together despite language differences to make a list of what they needed for language instruction to be successful in their classrooms.

Over ten years later, the South Slave Divisional Education Council has published more than 300 books, three dictionaries, apps, board games, and songs, because of their forethought and dedication.

“But what we're missing is legends,” she continued. “If the Elders are passing away, we're going to lose that, it's going to be gone.”

I mentioned I understood some Indigenous communities have certain legends that are only meant for certain people to hear because they contain sacred teachings, and wondered what her thoughts on this were.
"It's only been lately that people have been saying, 'Oh no, this is only oral, it should be taught orally.' Our people taught orally a long time ago because we didn't do written text until we started to get into syllabic writing. Our Elders, they are the ones that said we need to develop a way ... because the Elders and the young people couldn't speak to each other. They knew only syllabics, and the young people only knew the English characters. So people from Łutsel’ke, Deninu Kue, Kát’odeeche First Nation, and Hay River, and Fort Smith came together and they were here at the college for days. [With] Dr Eung-Do Cook, he was the one that was the linguist, and they started developing the Dëne Roman Orthography [with a] system called diphthongs where they have regular and high or regular and low vowel sounds. So the Elders agreed then that it was a must. That even if it was an oral tradition, we have to write them down for our kids and our future children to be able to read it, so they gave the permission, and these Elders are all long passed.

“But these Elders had given permission by working hard at that and they put it together. And so from there they told us that they used to say you couldn't do this, you couldn't do that, you couldn't do certain things, and we asked them how can we teach those in school and they told us you can teach them you can teach the children because if we don't we're going to lose that too. And we said how about other people who are non-Dëne who are learning how to read? They said the more people that learn to read it, the language will survive.

“And so young people today that want to hold on and say, well, this is an oral tradition and we should keep it and we shouldn't write it down, should remember that these Elders from all our communities on the south side came together and agreed that we need to expose it in order for our language to survive.

“And they said at that time that if we don't start doing something to get our language out there, because the flame was getting so small, the embers were burning out, our Elders were dying, and there were winters when we'd lose about five or six elders. And every Elder that we lose, we lose that much more library, much more Traditional Knowledge, much more of our culture, much more of our legends..."

“Whether you're Dëne or not, if you're interested in the language you should have the right. You should have the freedom and the right to learn that language. Because we don't touch into the very, very sacredness of it when we're teaching the language...it's not a complete teaching which is done in oral. Do you understand what I mean?”

She explained in Dëne culture, ceremonies can only be passed on to the gifted who want to learn the teachings. No matter how they are taught, she said, “…that person is going to learn because it's already a part of them.”

Going back to the question of whether there are certain stories that can only be shared through oral tradition, she said: “So that's what I think about oral. So when some younger people come together and say that [some stories are only for certain people, or cannot be written down], I would question if they were prophesies or if they had gifts like that, or what stories they feel shouldn't be taught in the language or in the schools.
“Because if we don't teach them, if we don't teach our peoples' legends, they're going to die. Just like the language is dying.”

Our conversation shifted to other communities who are beginning to publish their own stories.

“If a community or anybody is wanting to do that, what is stopping them?” she asked, adding that it is important to ask the community and the schools what they need. “Whatever is stopping them, find out what it is, gain that confidence in it, gain the knowledge in it, and start ... and then keep doing it.”

In her teaching career, she said, to interest students in the language she had to make it fun. She had to make it come alive: through SMART boards, puppets, recorders, and books. Like other research participants said, publications, in whatever form they come in, are just tools to facilitate the flow of language and cultural teachings.

“Stories are not just stories, stories are teaching values,” she said. “That's how my grandparents taught me. If I'm cutting dry fish and she'll tell me stories about the whitefish, or sometimes she'd tell me stories about how the spider saved the lives of people to remind you that no matter how small you are, your gifts can be plentiful.”

I asked how to respond to conflict over whether or not a story should be published.

“If someone asks you and says that's not how this goes, then you comfortably, politely tell them, this is my story and I give it to you,” she responded. “And a lot of storytellers, that's what we say. Now that I've told you this story, it is yours. So what you do with it, it is your duty to be able to keep the main [teachings], you know, but that story in itself as you grow, the more you tell it, the more it teaches you in itself. So they're teaching tools.”

4.3. Participant #2 - Elder, Educator

Over the summer, I sat down with an Elder who had spent the past decade or so in Fort Smith, although he is originally from Rocher River, a community that no longer exists. We spoke about Traditional Knowledge, being outsiders to a community, and the importance of listening and building relationships before taking action.

“I think Traditional Knowledge should be shared amongst our young people,” he said. “It's about our values and our beliefs our people have followed since time immemorial, it's been passed down from generation to generation, and it should stay that way. Those stories are for our children to learn about.

“As we're creating books and creating more plans or lessons or subject areas to Traditional Knowledge, that should stay within the schools, within the families, and communities to share.”

I mentioned in the spring of 2018, many organizations had received money to spend on Indigenous language resources and were approaching our school board requesting books. I
wondered how he felt about the stories being published by the community being shared with other organizations and schools across Canada.

“It's awesome to share,” he said, saying it is important to recover costs and fund future projects.

“But it's nice to see that others are coming to us and wanting our work that we've done, and gladly sharing them. It just exposes our language even more. To me that's important – the more people that have it, the better.

“We're evolving, and we have to use the tools we have to our advantage. It's a time now where everything is about information, either through written or visual. But orality is missing right now, that's something that I'd like to work more on because the kids just don't read out loud as much as they should or pass down information.”

Yet he observed language is becoming more prominent in the community: “Before it was silent, now you see it on stop signs, in stores. People are eager to share their language more now than ever before. I think that's important. We became silent for a little bit, because we'd lost a lot of our Elders who are speakers, so now it's creating that new community of speakers.”

I asked about finding a balance between what is in the best interest of making language visible and familiar in the community, and protecting what is sacred. Finding that balance, especially for an outsider, is not easy.

“Every individual had their own balance. Within themselves, they'll find it,” he replied. “The Elders always said that. People find their road. I always say "Jech'ani" – walk the path our ancestors walked. It's up to each individual to walk that path, pick up those traditions, pick up those values, pick up those beliefs, pick up the language. The question I have is how are we supporting them in terms of getting those values? Getting those beliefs, getting the language, so that they are supported as they walk. And look at the way we are doing the language: there is that support there. When people phone me about the language, I say go to the SSDEC website [where the publications are listed], it's all in there.”

I asked if he saw the dictionaries as a good thing. I had seen grumblings on Twitter from one person who believed they were too Westernized, because they were alphabetized by English word.

“We could say, 'but we've become Westernized,'” he said. “Right now we haven't [organized by Dëne word], it's the first edition. In the second edition we can change it, but this is the start. We finally put a pole down, we put our camp down, we're learning the language, we've got the resources that we have. We could fix it, if they feel we should change it, then let's do that – but we need to find the resources to do that, I always tell them.

“But at least we have the foundation set now, it's there. The Elders that did those dictionaries, I'm grateful for them. I'm grateful for the people that created the resources that we have, from
the translators to the storytellers who created those books and now we have resources and kids love it. So I see nothing wrong with it.”

I asked what lessons other publishers or communities could learn from our work. Involve the Elders, he said, to make sure you are recording the proper pronunciations of words. Be patient, “Because the language tells the story and tells the history of our people.”

I also wondered about community Protocols: how to ensure, as an outsider, you are following them, as they are rarely written down.

“Just ask questions. Go and ask people,” he said. “When I first moved here, I started talking to the Elders, because they're the carriers of knowledge. They have a lot of history. Just listening to their stories I got a sense of the community. Then I started talking to different families and different individuals in the community and just got a sense of where the community was at. Because sometimes those Protocols are lost that we don't practice anymore or they've been forgotten.

“If I go to [Fort] Providence now, I would not do anything. I would just listen. The Elders always said, when you go somewhere, just listen. Get to know everybody. The first five years I was here I wasn't vocal, I was quiet, I just listened.”

While many recent publishing conflicts have been the result of lack of consultation, there is another situation that occasionally arises: when a community is divided on whether or not a work should move forward.

“I'd ask them, 'How would you do it?'” he said, adding he would give them a chance to explain why they believe a story should not be published. He said the other key piece is finding out where that person is from, as many people come from satellite villages and thereby have different values and stories. If you are publishing a story based in the culture of Fort Smith, make sure the people you are talking to are also from Fort Smith and not from another community.

For him, it's important people tell their own stories about their own experiences: “If it's a broad [Traditional Knowledge story], it doesn't really tell the stories of the land. It's from individuals' own experiences.”

But for stories shared by the community, he suggested listening to the story not just as told by one person, but by many. If everyone is telling the same version of the story, then you know you have an accurate version of the story. He used respecting the water as an example: “I know when I talk to Elders from different regions, they all say the same thing. We don't conquer water, we respect water. We respect that power of the water because it comes from Mother Nature. She's just showing her true powers, the strength of the water is protected by the spirits that are around there. I heard that a lot from Elders. Everywhere I travelled, there's always a story about the power of the water.”
As a former negotiator, he also had advice to share on involving the entire community so there is a collective feeling of ownership over projects.

“I remember, working as a negotiator, that was one of my tasks, bringing all of these people together and talking about common issues, common values, common beliefs, to come up with something that would lead our people. I think it’s important to have dialogue with everybody and to get a sense of where everyone is going. Are there some commonalities that we have? Are there some contentious issues that we have? Some may not come to fruition, but others you can have agreement. So to me, it’s having that dialogue and finding that common ground. Two families could have a feud that's 150-years-old, I know that back home it's like that. But it's to find them and sit down and talk, and develop that trust.”

Our discussion evolved into the politics of Fort Smith and the familial connections he has discovered he has to the community which have made him more willing to be vocal. But for outsiders who will never find those connections, he says it comes down to building trust and earning respect.

4.4. Participant #3 - Smith’s Landing First Nation Employees

When I returned to Fort Smith and began the process of conducting interviews, one of my first steps was to contact the First Nations’ offices and ask to meet. I sat down with the two employees from Smith’s Landing First Nation, one of whom is a member and one who was hired from outside of the community.

After brainstorming a list of people to contact and how to compensate them, we also discussed the importance of visiting the First Nation office and asking for permissions.

“A lot of stories I don’t think people want documented, they want to keep it oral history and more traditional law or sacred stories. But then at the same time, we hear all the time about how the Elders are being lost and all of those stories are going with them. So at what point do we say we’re going to record those stories, and who is that for? So if you are recording stories, how do you do it in a way that you’re not losing your intellectual property and Traditional Knowledge, so that it’s not going out into Amazon and becoming bastardized?” wondered the employee from outside of the community. “And in my experience too, it depends on how comfortable Elders are with you.”

“So going in with a totally open mind, and no preconceived notions,” or you know more than somebody else, is I think so important,” they continued. “And that I find happens a lot with scientists or PhDs. People show up in communities and think they know everything because they’ve got seven years of university education, whereas it’s like, okay, talk to somebody who has lived in the bush their whole life, they’ve got 75 years of a PhD education on the bush. Just challenging these notions of what is education, or what is knowledge or wisdom is really important.
“It's always good to have a champion in the community too, so even if you can find that one person who can say ‘Hey, you know, this person is trying to do some work, we've got to work with them,’ it opens some doors. That one door can just take you everywhere.

“You're always going to find some of those grumpy people who don’t want to talk to you too. Even within a community one person might say yes but the next person might say no, and they might be brother and sister. You just never know. You also need to be careful because you don't want it to seem like a betrayal, like, ‘Oh, I'm here, I'm building this great relationship with people,’ just to get their stories out of them and publish them.”

As a non-Indigenous person working for the First Nation, she said she gets approached by other non-Indigenous people who want her to answer their questions and she tells them to go and find an Elder. She wondered if people were nervous to approach First Nations members directly: “I think there’s some weird stigmas there that people have to get over.”

They shared stories about people, mostly researchers, not coming to meet with the First Nation but rather sending letters in to get signed for ethics approval and then going off to do their research in the territory without ever meeting face-to-face with the First Nation. As our conversation moved toward practices researchers should be aware of I realized how similar the publisher and researcher roles in the community could be.

“There was one lady who came here, she wanted to pick medicines,” added the First Nation member. “She lives in town here and she had cancer, and she was going with natural medicines. She’s not an Aboriginal person but she came to the office and she asked permission to go out there and I was like, yeah, go ahead.”

Both employees stressed how appreciated – and how rare – occurrences like this are. No matter how small the ask, it goes a long way in building a relationship with the Indigenous community.

4.5. Participant #4 - Publisher, Non-Indigenous Participant
The South Slave Divisional Education Council literacy coordinators began publishing English-language levelled reading books starring the education council’s mascot, Rufus the Reading Rascal, in the early 2000s. The Indigenous language instructors looked at those books and determined they needed books about their region and their children too. One person I interviewed began working with the language instructors in the mid-2000s, and at his very first meeting with them to strategize about language promotion the group said, “We want books.”

“So one of the first things that we did was hold a writers' workshop with all of our Aboriginal language instructors at the time. We just basically sat down and talked about what made for a good children’s book and the kind of stories that could be told and just bandied around some ideas. We had two or three group meetings on that area and so a number of our very first books – Who Lives in the Bush, Is it Christmas Yet? – they came from those first writer workshops that we did, and so the authors of most of those were Indigenous language instructors at the time,” he said.
“We wanted to ensure that the books we published were of high quality in terms of the look, the feel of the paper, the illustrations, and so on. The north was publishing a number of books at the time in different regions, but many of them lacked that real professional look to them. In some cases they were Xerox copies, and they weren't published on good quality paper. So we wanted something that was equivalent to something that you could pick up at a Chapters or a store like that. That certainly wasn't our goal to create books for the mass market, because we knew they were very, very specific to the language, but something that had the same look and feel and sense of quality about them.”

From there, the SSDEC began partnering with organizations like the Cree Language Program and authors such as Richard Van Camp, who is from Fort Smith, to push the initiative even further.

I inquired about the challenges he encountered over the first decade publishing books, and he said the one main issue was the challenge of finding northern illustrators for stories, while another issue has been finding translators who will generate translations others will appreciate and respect.

“No matter who we get to translate, even my go-to people, there will be some that will say, ‘Oh, that's not the right word,’ or, ‘I don't recognize that word.’ One strategy we were using that helped alleviate some of those issues was to take the translation from whoever had done it and share it with the whole group of instructors in that group and they would go through it and come to consensus on what the right words were. So we did that for some books, but certainly not for all, and when we had big projects going on … we just didn't have the time for the instructors to come together to edit 30 or 40 books at a time.

“It would be a massive amount of time for each group to go through. If you wanted to alleviate the issue of translation, it would be a matter of having a committee or a group go through the text and agree on the text. That's what we do with the dictionaries – it's not one person doing the dictionary, it's a group of Elders that come to consensus on those. So that's why I've always been comfortable with what we've put in the dictionaries, and not as comfortable with the stories that we've had in the books.”


“[The dictionaries are] the projects that have the most impact on language revitalization, I think, because a number of people have come to me later after the dictionaries and talked about their use of the dictionaries, that they use them regularly and find them valuable and it's helped them with maintaining or learning their language. [Language instructors] have always told people that it's a thing they rely on and will refer to them when they're trying to figure out how to spell a word or figure out what a word might be.
“What it does help do, especially from a teaching perspective, is it's helped confirm or standardize word choice and word spelling which still in our communities is an individual thing. When we get [language instructors] to provide us with some text, you have to get it all laid out and then hand it back to them, and they'll change ten percent of what they've written, because it's a different day and they'll be looking at it from a different perspective and they say, “Oh, no, that's not how that's spelled,” even though they gave you the exact spelling three weeks before that. So I find with the translations, there is a lot of variability between individuals and even within the same individual as to the translation part. So the dictionary serves to provide a foundation for the languages and it helps to somewhat standardize the word choice and the spelling of those words at least for those communities.”

Over the years, the process of putting a dictionary together has evolved as those involved have learned from past experiences and community members participating in the process for the first time have brought forward new ideas.

“We would gather together [a core group of six to eight] respected Elders – Elders who were respected for their language fluency within the languages in those specific communities – and together they would basically generate the list of words and topics and come to some kind of consensus on what the word is and how it's spelled.”

They hired a linguist to support the standardization of spelling according to the principles of Déné languages that had been established when Dr Eung-Do Cook worked with another group of Elders in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The first dictionary was a topical dictionary, and the second and third dictionaries evolved to include phrases and sentence-building sections for introductory Déné Süłiné.

“With the dictionaries we felt it was important not just to have the words written and recorded, in terms of text, but also having an audio of those files, so we spent a lot of time recording how these words were spoken and said and attaching those so you had a CD or online option,” he continued.

“I guess a final thing I would say about the dictionaries was the value in getting students involved. With the Fort Res dictionary, the work took place in the school itself. The Elders would meet once every two to three weeks and spend a whole day in the school, because they wanted the kids to see them working on their language on their behalf. We had school groups – in Łutselk’è as well – that would come into the meeting and sit around the edges while the Elders were talking so they could see what the process looked like. We asked the kids at the schools to give us word lists, words they wanted in the dictionary. I remember, especially in Łutselk’è, where they would have lists that the students had generated and they would say, ‘Okay, we have to come up with these words’ even though there were no translations for them. They wanted to develop a translation for these words - things like 'haunted house’ and ‘rocket ship’ and ‘lobster’ – words that don't have any cultural significance, but they are the sort of words that the kids had a relationship with in English and wanted translations of them in the dictionaries. I think the Elders, especially the Łutselk’è group, had great fun coming up with new words to
translate the words the students wanted. I remember 'lobster' translates to 'red fish with big claws.'"

“The one thing about the dictionary that is lacking, in all of the dictionaries that we've done, and I'm trying to get this into the new Kât’odeeche First Nation one ... In our dictionaries, we have the English words and they are translated into the languages, but what's lacking are some of the Dëne words that don't have an easy translation into English, words that have a certain connotation or meaning that doesn't easily or readily translate into English. So these would be words specific to cultural events and experiences. Like for instance, you often hear in Inuktitut there are 20 or 30 words for snow, so each word is describing snow in a different state, form, or texture, whereas in English you talk about snow or ice. So what I'm after with the new Kât’odeeche dictionary is a list of those. Some people describe them as sleeping words, that these are words that aren't in use anymore, but I think it's deeper than just the sleeping words. These are words that are really specific to the cultural and traditional experience, so specific that they don't readily have an English translation. We're after those words, so there won't be just a simple word in English to describe it but there might be a phrase that describes what that word means.”

I was also curious how he, as a non-Indigenous publisher, had navigated conflict within a community over whether or not something should be sent to publication.

Like other research participants, he has tried to be proactive in working with respected community members. Additionally, the dictionary committee tried to involve Elders from different family groups so everyone in the community felt represented.

“There was an effort to create a congenital group that could work together towards a common goal. The goal of creating a dictionary was too important to be sidetracked by petty indifferences. However, every effort was made to be inclusive and provide a voice for all to contribute even if they weren't part of the working group. Providing drafts of the dictionary to other fluent speakers and providing an online forum for others to view the working draft of the dictionary and suggest additions or corrections were two of the initiatives aimed at including others in the project.”

The committee also put the dictionary online before it was printed and invited people to submit feedback and additional words and phrases electronically, but he said the labour involved in setting this up was not worth the response they received.

He continued: “In terms of stories, like for picture books, one thing that I've found we have to be very careful of is, particularly when it came to the publishing of legends, it's sort of a matter of asking the question, 'Whose story is this?' and 'Do we have permission to share it and publish it?' So I'm very careful when someone presents a story and says, 'Here's a legend that we want to share.' I always want to make sure that they're giving us permission to publish that story and share it with others, because some things aren't meant to be shared and some people object to some of these things being shared and put on paper.
“It is a matter of going through the Elders. If it's a young person [coming to you] saying, 'Here's a legend I heard and I'm going to write this up and get it published,' then I would ask if they had the permission of those that gave them that story to publish it.”

4.6. Participant #5 - Author, Educator

(Names have been changed)

The Northwest Territories has nine official Indigenous languages, but rarely are there stories published in those languages or about the people who speak them. One person I spoke to is changing that by publishing a set of books featuring a person from each community. The book she is currently working on is about a man from [a community]. We spoke over the phone about the lessons she has learned and the processes she has followed in working all over the NWT, often spending up to two years putting each book together.

She began by talking about how each book includes a traditional story from the community, which is also translated into the language of the community.

“This particular book has a very sacred story within it that I didn’t know was a sacred story when I was asked by [a community] to go and record it,” she began.

“What happened was Jim*, who works for the [a community], he was the one who said, “Go work with this particular Elder, have this particular translator work with you to help get the story, and get this particular story.” So I flew to his community and worked with him, and along the way managed to have that story written down but there was such a sense of unease in the community. What I found out afterwards was that story never had permission to be written down before. It's a story that normally is only shared by men, and it takes place in a place that only men are supposed to go. So you could imagine how the Elder and some of the community members were perceiving me when I was asking them naively to tell me this story.

“Eventually I built a relationship with this Elder and he did tell me the story, but there was also a discomfort at writing it down. After going back to Jim and asking him what had happened and what was going on … he said, ‘Well, what’s happening right now is that there is historical mistrust of writing stories down because of stories being taken, and the person writing them down being the one who is benefiting, not the community, and not the storyteller.’ And he said, ‘The community members don’t know your process and don’t know that times have changed – in the sense of, with the signing of their agreement and self-government, they have more comfort in ownership over stories but not everybody is ready to have them written down.”

I asked her, if she could go back, what she would have done differently.

“I don’t think I could have done anything differently, because the person who sent me there was the best cultural leader and he knew exactly what he was getting into and what I was getting into,” she replied. “He purposefully didn’t tell me, I found out afterwards, because he said it’s in my naivety that I was probably going to have more success.
“He’s further along the version that we write sacred stories down because Elders are dying and we’ll lose them and we won’t have them at all. We were caught in a time period where some community members were ready to share them being printed and others were not. So we had to have a community meeting and discuss and work through the processes, and it took quite a long time, but eventually we came to an agreement on what version of the story could be shared in print, how they wanted the story."

For example, she said, the Elders decided they didn’t want the name of the story published in the book, because the name is an identifier of the place. The Elders knew people should not go to the place without guidance and an understanding of Protocol. They were concerned young people may die because they would seek out the place without having all of the information. The decision to protect parts of the story wasn’t just about protecting culture, but about protecting the physical well-being of people who may read the story.

“And what’s interesting is, since this version has been put in print, the [community] themselves have printed other versions of the story and you will find the name printed. It’s a process that is evolving. I think one of the major lessons I’ve also learned is that just because something is something today, it doesn’t mean it’s going to be again the next day.”

What will remain the same, however, is the community’s ownership of traditional stories.

“When you do the copyright at the front of the book, it will say something like ‘No version of this can be printed without sole permission of the publisher.’ I had to work with the publisher to get them to change that little blurb. I insisted that it says within there, ‘Except for the traditional stories which are held within this book, and they remain within the sole ownership of the [the community], not the publisher.’

“We still have the story of our book, of what experiences we’ve had in our version. Of course, that’s our version, that’s our story. But the traditional stories held within the book, those are not our stories. And so changing the copyrights themselves is really important.”

She said since she began publishing books in 2003, publishers have been doing a better job: when she started, no publishers would publish the books in Indigenous languages because they wouldn’t make any money on such a small print run. Now there is funding and a desire to do so, and requesting the copyright be revised is becoming more common.

“The other really important thing when you’re writing down a traditional story is that there is more than one version and that is how a story stays alive … the storyteller in an oral tradition makes the story relevant to the listener. So as soon as you write it down, that’s where the expression ‘paper stays put’ [comes from] – because it’s like the story dies. If you don’t keep it alive in the oral sense you won’t have the other versions that live in a different place, like the Yamoria stories that are relevant to each location. Sometimes the same message is in a different location and people will bring it into the present day and they’ll talk about it happening with a skidoo rather than snowshoes and it doesn’t make the story less relevant until you write
the darn thing down and then it's dead. And that's 'the version.' So I think when we are publishing stories it's not only really critical to say 'as told by...' but to say somewhere, 'go and ask your grandparent,' or, 'keep in mind this story may be different by a different Elder,' so that the idea of a living story doesn't die just because we have a publishing industry where we write things down. But I think we have that responsibility."

We began to talk about the importance of building relationships in the communities you are working in: “It's just knocking on the door and not being afraid to ask: what should I do? How would you like me going about this?” she said. “Sometimes people are just afraid to go ask. We work on this all the time with the teachers. They’re like, ‘Oh, I can just go ask the Chief?’ and I’m like, ‘Yep, just go ask him,’ and it takes people a while to realize that's okay.

“It's okay to make mistakes too, through that you build relationships and then you're going to get a good product. There is no cookie cutter. Ever. Even in Fort Smith, how you ask the Métis community is different than how you ask the Dene Sųłiné community.

“And it’s never going to be fool-proof. I have learned that if you work with an open heart and do your best it will be okay, but there will still be somebody who will be sad … or hurt in some way.”

She gave the example of a project she had worked on with an Elder who gave her signed permission to use her photos. But then the Elder passed on and the Elder’s granddaughter was angry her grandmother’s photos are in the schools and books. Conflicting permissions can be complicated in situations where the book has already been published and distributed and thus cannot be easily recalled by the publisher.

“I don’t think there is a definitive answer [when there is disagreement regarding whether a story should be published]. If for the most part people are in agreement then what happens is those individuals say, ‘Please, we’ve done all this work and we’re excited…’”

She told the story of when a photo of the Old Lady of the Falls, a sacred site, was published in a book in the 1980s.

“People were not ready to see that picture in print at that time. Having said that, since then, you can go into almost every home in Łutselk’e, and in every office, and it’s printed and people are so proud of it. Years later, when we did [a book], I wanted to tell the story of the Old Lady of the Falls … and we wanted to use that photo, but I knew the history. So I went to a Band Council meeting and I got a Band Council resolution that it was okay to have the picture in print, so therefore, if somebody got mad at me later, I had actually had it voted in by the community. You can’t go back in time, but you can go back and show you did everything you thought you could to make sure you were doing the right thing.

“You just don’t know what’s going to impact someone, right? But like I said, asking, that’s just the way to go. Always ask.
“Every community I've gone to, I've been new when I arrived but my process has been … to ask the Band Council leadership, ‘Who do you respect here? Who should I talk to, to do a book with?’"

She added she has also learned to be honest and open from the start in explaining the financial side of publishing to collaborators so they understand the money is being distributed fairly.
Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1. Significant Findings & Interpretation

When I started this research, I hoped to be able to present a list of guidelines for consultation I could follow when publishing Dëne Sųłiné books in Fort Smith, one that could be used as an example by other publishers. Instead, I realized these guidelines vary from project to project, depending on those with whom you are working, and depending on how the community feels about publishing. Instead, what research participants shared with me was the importance of building relationships, taking the necessary time to do a project properly, and asking plenty of questions and absorbing and respecting the answers. These foundational pieces may not be a set of Protocols in the traditional sense, but they do make an excellent starting point for publishing Indigenous literature or working in an Indigenous community.

While Elements of Indigenous Style takes a pan-Indigenous approach to advising editors and publishers, I wanted to hone in on one community and explore on a micro-level what considerations must be taken when working with the community.

My findings mirror Younging’s “Culturally appropriate publishing practices for Indigenous authors and content” chapter and Janke’s principles developed for the Australian Council for the Arts, but with a few notable additions. Younging highlights an open circle of collaboration, taking the necessary time, respecting Elders (get to know them, listen, offer a gift of respect, extend right to review), respecting Traditional Knowledge and Oral Traditions (seek consent, don’t publish in breach of protocols, assign copyright correctly, and don’t assume public domain), and respecting the relationship (2018).

Janke’s list includes “respect, Indigenous control, communication, consultation, consent, interpretation, integrity, authenticity, secrecy and confidentiality, attribution, proper returns, continuing cultures, and recognition and protection,” summarizes Mira Burri (2010).

In this chapter, I will review the advice shared by research participants, with a special focus on new themes identified by Dëne Sųłiné and non-Indigenous people not covered in-depth in previous guides: the importance and ease of asking for permissions, the importance of involving youth in the process, how to deal with conflict, and the importance of understanding how culture is always evolving. For ease of readability, the chapter will be written so it is accessible for both publishers and Indigenous communities looking to it as a guide.

I was frequently struck by the similarities between publishing in Indigenous communities and researching in Indigenous communities. If all publishers read Decolonizing Methodologies, then perhaps publishing would be less extractive and more supportive. Decolonizing Methodologies. Smith explains research can allow communities to tell their own stories, and explains how this can be a healing and empowering process if done properly. As she writes, “The need to tell our stories remains the powerful imperative of a powerful form of resistance” (1999).
The gatekeepers of the publishing industry are aware change is needed but, despite their best intentions, they still make mistakes that cause real harm to vulnerable communities. While I believe mainstream publishers now see the value and importance in working collaboratively with Indigenous communities and giving the marginalized a voice, these publishers will still stumble along the way.

Researchers and publishers are told they need to consult with Indigenous communities, but what that consultation process looks like varies community to community and it is not always clear how this process begins. Non-Indigenous people I spoke to highlighted other non-Indigenous people seem to feel more comfortable approaching them with questions, rather than meet with the Indigenous community they want to work with. Throughout my own experiences and over the course of this research, I have learned people are far more approachable and willing to have conversations, no matter their position of power, than one might believe.

As one of the non-Indigenous authors I interviewed said, “It’s just knocking on the door and not being afraid to ask: what should I do? How would you like me going about this?”

It is the publisher’s responsibility to address their gaps in knowledge and reach out to the community from whose knowledge they will profit. If there is one thing people repeated over and over throughout my research, and which bears repeating again now, it is: it’s okay to ask for permission. Asking questions and approaching the community is a huge part of a meaningful consultation process. You can talk to the Chief, to the Elders, to First Nations Council members and councillors, to educators in the community. They are busy people, but they encourage and welcome dialogue that builds relationships through demonstrating willingness to learn.

Like with any research, visit the First Nation office to introduce yourself and your project, and ask what permissions you may need to get and from whom. Ask who is respected, for their language, for their Traditional Knowledge, or for their stories depending on your project. And then keep asking – at the school, at community events, or wherever people gather. Ask how this permission should be granted: do you need something in writing, a First Nation Council motion, or just an ‘okay’ from one family? Similarly, ask who the different family groups are and invite representation from each so the whole community feels represented if the project represents the community. Depending on the scope of the project, the publisher may need to hold multiple large community meetings or smaller working group sessions. The more people who culture- and language-check stories, the more accurate and more accepted the final product will be.

As other researchers have said, consultation is not a box you check to say the community had their chance to speak, but an ongoing process (Younging 2018). And if the people you are consulting with decide something shouldn’t be published, then it shouldn’t be published (Younging 2018). The damage to the relationship, to the community’s willingness to share their knowledge, and to the publishing industry will be irreparably damaged. One publication is not worth all of this.

It is also the publisher’s responsibility to explain the processes within the publishing industry, so those sharing knowledge understand not just how the funds will flow back to the author or the
community, but also how the publishing process works and the potential repercussions of print. The Australia Council for the Arts adds “You should never expect Aboriginal people to do all the education because it’s unfair and a personal drain ... Know when you are becoming an intruder rather than an accomplice” (2007).

“If I were to offer a recommendation to a novice researcher in this field,” wrote Mela Sarkar after ten years studying Mi’gmaq language revitalization, “it would be that at the inception of relationship-building – as soon as it becomes clear that there is a relationship in the building – some kind of formal step be incorporated to ascertain what people’s expectations are on both sides of the relationship” (2017).

Occasionally, conflicting views on permissions emerge within the community. Multiple participants referenced occasions where the community or an Elder had given permission, but another outspoken person was opposed to the idea. The participants I interviewed offered the following, similar advice: talk to that person. Find out what part of the project they don’t want to see in print, and why. Offer them opportunities to become more involved in the process and work with them to find a solution that will benefit both parties. Inquire around town about them: what is their reputation like, and how are they connected to the community? In the varied experience of the people I spoke with, they were able to come to an agreement everyone was comfortable with and the projects went ahead.

Different people and communities have differing ideas about what is acceptable. Some are more ready and willing to see their stories in print, and if the community collectively decides it is not the proper time for a story to be shared, then publishers need to respect that. A “no” will not necessarily be a “no” forever, though. Past trauma; the community’s relationships both past and present with researchers, publishers, resource development companies, and other extractive visitors; where the community is at in terms of language loss and language revitalization; familiarity with modern technologies; and who the Elders are in the community will all impact the publications coming out of a community. Neighbouring communities may have starkly different ideas of what can be published. As publishers we need to respect ideologies and never assume just because one community gave permission means all communities will. Conversely, just because a community doesn’t give permission for something to published today, that doesn’t mean they won’t change their mind a few years later, as one non-Indigenous participant told me. Culture is evolving and alive, and the publications coming out of a community will mirror the community’s place in time.

In the end, projects should be by the community and for the community, not just for the publisher’s profit. In many Indigenous cultures, what is best for the youth and for future generations is a driving force in all they do. In my research, the educators I spoke with talked about the importance of expanding the language resources available to students and developing resources the students can see themselves in. With this in mind, publishers should not only ask if they can publish, but ask what needs to be published. And how can books and publications be used as tools for language revitalization and passing on the teachings in each community?
When the SSDEC had groups of Elders putting dictionaries together, they held their meetings in the schools so the students could see the work the Elders were doing for them and for future generations. They were able to observe the process, be invited to participate, and see that their language, their culture, and their stories matter.

Finally, a word on Protocols. In Canadian law, we see Protocols as having no “real” power as they are not enshrined in Canadian legislation, even though they existed long before the current system. Like the Canadian judicial system, community Protocols were established to protect people and protect their culture. It is important for publishers wanting to decolonize and not just indigenize publishing to accept these Protocols as law. This is a chance for publishing to demonstrate what true decolonization can look like and take real steps to building relationships with Indigenous Peoples in the communities they work. Over the course of this research, I was told to “ask” and “listen” and “build relationships.” There was less of a focus on specific Protocols, which would vary depending on the knowledge in question. But by following this foundational advice, publishers will discover which Protocols are applicable to their different projects.

5.2. Recommendations for Future Research
This paper explores how to begin conversations with Indigenous communities about publishing, but future research could further explore different themes that came out of the interviews. For example, research could examine the different factors at play in communities affecting how liberal their attitude toward publishing is, how best to overcome inter-community conflict in publishing, or how best to incorporate language or Traditional Knowledge into stories. I suspect, similar to the results in this study, the answers to these questions will vary widely from community to community and will only be representative of a snapshot in time.
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